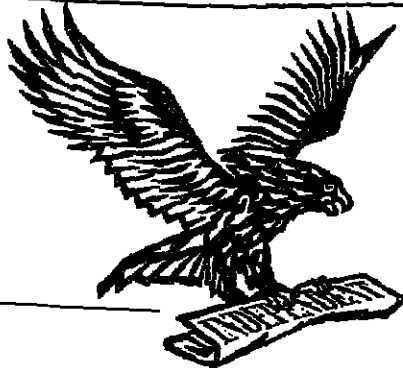


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MONDAY 8 JULY 1996

WEATHER Sunny spells and heavy showers

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Fat cats still get their cream

Directors doubling pay despite Greenbury

MICHAEL HARRISON
PETER RODGERS
and DIANA KOSHEL

Directors at some of Britain's biggest companies are in line for bonuses which could double their base salaries despite last year's failure over executive pay and attempts to put an end to boardroom excesses through the Greenbury report.

The scale of the awards at companies such as Boots, National Power, Railtrack and United Utilities, is likely to provoke renewed controversy because the sums involved could match or even exceed amounts paid under discredited share-option schemes.

An analysis by the Independent of incentive schemes introduced at 10 top companies to comply with Greenbury shows that they could typically pay up to 100 per cent of base salary when long and short-term bonuses are included.

In a number of cases, executives have also been paid bonuses completely unconnected with their performance or that of the companies, or as rewards for successful takeovers.

The emergence of the new schemes could cause fresh prob-

year, but could double this with short and long-term bonuses for "outstanding performance". The long-term scheme is said typically to give about a third of salary.

The scheme has been attacked for starting long-term performance payments once the company matches the FTSE100 index, an undemanding target, and for paying out the full bonus if the index is beaten by only 40 per cent.

United Utilities' scheme has yet to be approved by shareholders. Its directors would begin to receive their payouts if the company is merely in the top 50 of the FTSE 100 measured by total return, including dividends.

The chief executive, Brian Staples, who will earn £300,000 base salary this year, could receive up to 40 per cent in short-term bonus and another 87.5 per cent for the long-term scheme payable in 2000, bringing his potential total to £682,500.

Railtrack's chief executive, John Edmonds, could add 140 per cent to his base salary with short-term bonus and long-term share awards by the company, if it achieves the

Where the big bonuses are

Company	Short term bonus (as percentage of basic salary)	Long term bonus (as percentage of basic salary)
Boots	35% maximum	Up to 90%
BP	70% maximum	Not disclosed
Grand Met	50% maximum	Up to 40%
Guinness	12.5% minimum	Not specified
Hyder	40% maximum	Up to 50%
ICI	40% maximum	Up to 40% + options
National Grid	37% maximum	Up to 37% in shares
National Power	40% maximum	Up to 33% + options
Railtrack	40% maximum	Up to 100% in shares
United Utilities	40% maximum	Up to 87.5%

lems for the Government by placing "fat-cat" boardroom excess back at the top of the political agenda despite John Major's attempt to put a lid on it through Greenbury.

The centrepiece of the Greenbury proposals was the wider use of long-term performance-related bonus schemes instead of share options.

However, some big institutional shareholders are becoming concerned at the complexity of these schemes, the lack of demanding performance targets, and the absence of information in some cases on the maximum potential awards directors could receive.

The Pensions and Investment Research Consultancy, Pirc, is expected to renew its attack on the way some new long-term schemes are structured in a report this week.

Lord Blyth, the chief executive of Boots - whose chairman Sir Michael Angus was on the Greenbury committee - could earn a short-term bonus of up to 35 per cent of his base salary of £470,000 and the long-term scheme pays up to another 90 per cent, if the company performs in the top three of its peer group, taking his earnings over £1m.

Many privatised utilities and Railtrack, the rail infrastructure company, have announced long-term schemes to replace share options. Some will make payment in kind in the form of the company's shares rather than cash.

Keith Henry, chief executive of National Power, was paid £325,000 base salary last

maximum on two criteria, for earnings per share growth and the punctuality of trains.

The maximum payout comes when Railtrack earnings growth exceeds 13.5 per cent in real terms and when the second target - based on measurements by the rail regulator of train punctuality - is achieved 100 per cent.

If a new long-term plan is approved in 1997, David Jones of National Grid could increase his base salary of £250,000 by 74 per cent with long and short-term awards combined.

Hyder, the Welsh utility, has a long-term scheme that pays up to 50 per cent of base salary in the third year, which with short-term bonus could bring the average payout to 56 per cent a year over the period.

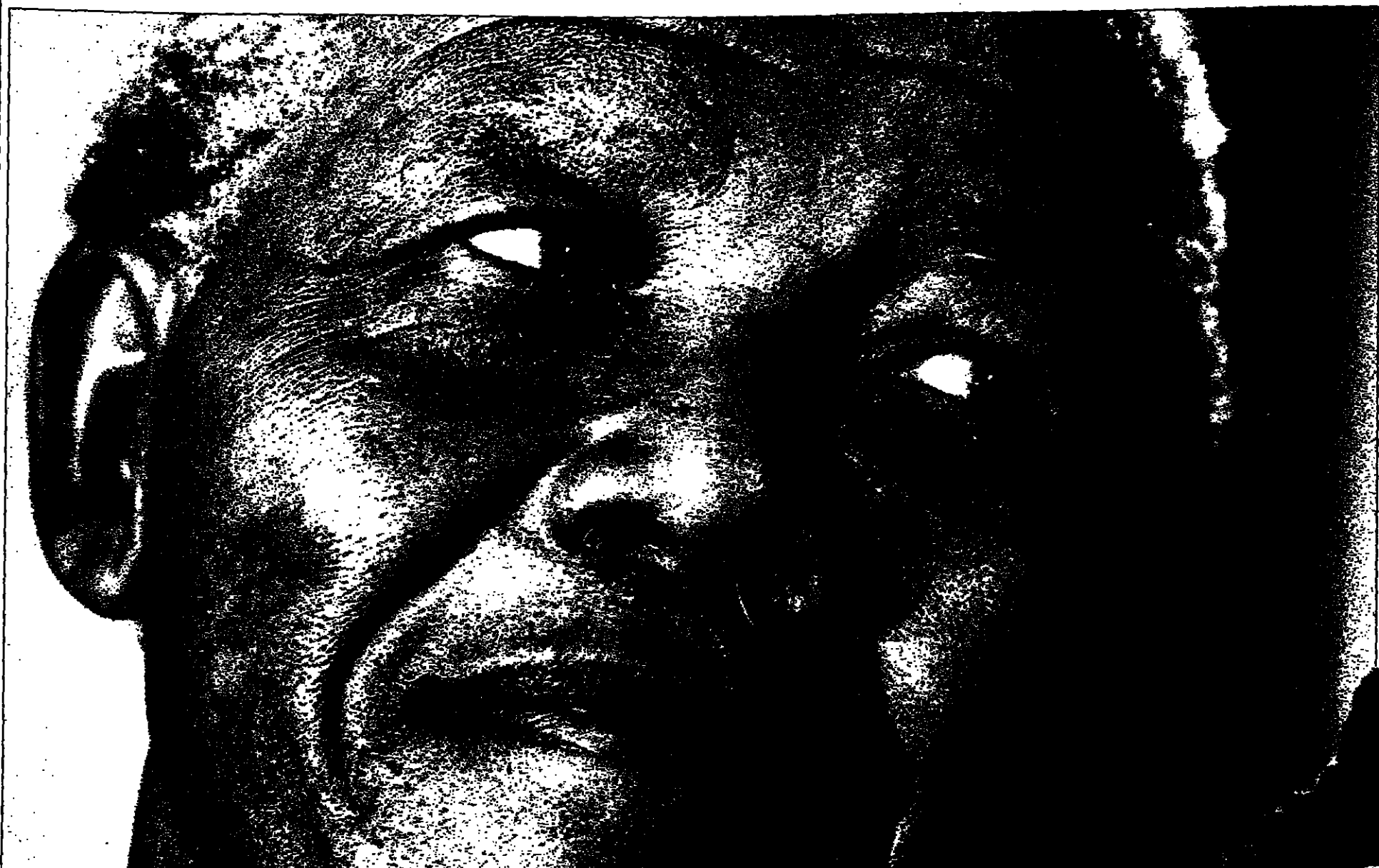
Institutional shareholders have made clear they accept high rewards as long as they are clearly linked to performance.

But even senior executives of the companies involved admit to difficulty in following how their schemes work. One said: "People here have trouble understanding the scheme details in the annual report."

There have also been complaints from non-executive directors that discussion of excessively complex executive bonus schemes has been dominating board meetings at the expense of other business.

One of the problems in assessing the full impact of some schemes, such as BP's, is that they link performance to confidential and commercially sensitive targets which are agreed year by year.

With his halo intact and glowing...



Suffering in silence: President Mandela has 'lost his family', been divorced and been imprisoned, but he is still a symbol of hope and forgiveness

Photograph: Glynn Giffiths

...Saint Nelson is coming to town

MARY BRAID
Johannesburg

Nelson Mandela is a saint; or at least, the closest a man can come to being a saint while still being a head of government. When FW de Klerk finally ordered the release of Mandela after 27 years in jail, the world knew that he was freeing a legend. Amazingly, six fraught years later, Mandela's halo is largely in place, which accounts for the sense of excitement that much of Britain feels about his arrival here today for a week of state pomp, topped off with a visit to Brighton.

He is, in some respects, an unlikely leader. The President is no fiery orator and a painfully ponderous interviewee. In the era of the spin doctor and the news bite, Mandela with his old-world charm - preserved in part by his incarceration - seems a relic from another age. But at home and abroad there is agreement that Nelson Mandela, 78 this month, is one of the greatest statesmen of the 20th century.

Even amongst South African whites who once regarded him as more black devil than saint, his standing is incredibly high. Shaking his head, a white South African driver sums up his view of the ANC in government: "Crime up, rand down." Johannesburg's city centre has "turned black" and is infested

with muggers. The country's finances are in the hands of a minister who cannot do sums. But mention Nelson and the man turns colour blind and melts. "President Mandela is marvellous," he says. "All those years in prison - for no good reason - and yet he shows not bitterness."

Mandela's popularity owes much to South Africa's extraordinary negotiated revolution, the ANC's long hard struggle against the most formidable

hannenburg newspaper editorial observed, President Mandela is the first statesman since George Washington whom people believe is incapable of telling a lie.

Of course, it helps if your political rise involved none of the usual backstabbing and corruption. Mandela never lobbied or conspired for leadership. He simply descended from prison, an international symbol of black suffering, as leader in waiting.

He seems always to have had a sense of destiny... He was raised in the royal house of the Thembu tribe. The tribal aristocrat turned freedom fighter is a rare concoction

white minority rule in sub-Saharan Africa and the heart-warming justness of the cause. But it is Mandela's own qualities which seem to allow him to float untainted above the mire of modern politics. The public perception is of warmth, goodness and integrity; more spiritual leader than grubby pragmatic politician.

Self-sacrifice sets him apart at a time when politicians are seen as vain, greedy and primarily self-interested. South African novelist Nadine Gordimer points to Mandela's remarkable memory for people and family and details as evidence of an unusual level of "other-directedness." As one Jo-

hannesburg newspaper editorial observed, President Mandela is the first statesman since George Washington whom people believe is incapable of telling a lie. Of course, it helps if your political rise involved none of the usual backstabbing and corruption. Mandela never lobbied or conspired for leadership. He simply descended from prison, an international symbol of black suffering, as leader in waiting.

Mandela proved a skilled and fierce negotiator during the dangerous path to transition. But two years after South

Africa's first democratic elections, his role is essentially that of racial conciliator. Mandela is a living symbol of collective suffering and the possibility of forgiveness and moving on.

Prison robbed him of family, and divorce from Winnie broke his heart. Some of his grandchildren live with him, but the demands of office mean he spends too little time with them. Shulu says: "He is a family man, and so we must assume that he is lonely."

Some criticism has surfaced. Young radicals complain that Mandela bends over backwards for whites, while the majority of blacks languish in appalling conditions. Reconciliation, they argue, has had its day.

But it is to Mandela's credit that among the majority of ordinary South Africans, his philosophy of reconciliation is still treasured. "He has lived his life for all of South Africans, black and white," says Jacob, an elderly black South African. "We never forgot him... he was the Messiah."

At his pre-London visit briefing last week, Mr Mandela was characteristically modest about his own stature and the overriding interest in what analysts call the WAM (What After Mandela) factor. He will not stand at the 1999 elections. A new democracy deserved better than a septuagenarian leader, he said. There were younger men

- "head and shoulders" above him - ready to "shake and move" the country. Increasingly, policy matters in South Africa are handled by Thabo Mbeki, deputy president, who has been anointed as successor.

Allister Sparks, the eminent South African author and journalist, says Mandela's standing is all the more remarkable given the international contempt

for Africa. But he is not surprised by his enduring appeal. "The world is ruled by political dwarfs," argued Mr Sparks.

"I don't think there is a leader in the world today who can command respect like Mr Mandela. They are largely grey like John Major or a bit tacky like Clinton. Mandela believes in something. What do the rest of us believe in?"

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A FINAL BURST OF ENERGY

Streak of bad luck sinks Wimbledon finalist

RICHARD EDMONDSON

They have struck at cricket, they have struck at rugby and the very courageous have appeared at football, but at the Elysian fields of the Wimbledon championships a streaker was an unknown phenomenon until yesterday.

It was 2.03, as the Duke and Duchess of Kent settled into their seats in the Royal Box, when our heroine appeared. By great Wimbledon tradition, the skinny vestment she wore was predominantly white. There was nothing on top and, as she passed in front of the men's singles finalists Richard Krajicek and MaliVai Washington, she flicked up the flap of an insubstantial apron to establish the

bottom half matched. "I saw these, you know, just wobbling around," Washington said later. "Then I got flustered and boom, three sets later, I had gone."

Before then, the constabulary of SW19 had intervened to take away the woman who had been working during the fortnight for Wimbledon's caterers, Town & Country. The only slices she had seen were the pieces of pizza served from her posting.

The dove of streaking, long part of British sporting culture, is Enika Roe, who braved the January weather of 1982 at an England rugby union international at Twickenham. Her appearance prompted Steve Smith, the England scrum-half, to point out the intruder to his

short-sighted captain, Bill Beaumont. "There's a woman over there," he said. "And she's got your bum on her chest."

Whether yesterday's was an artistic gesture or a mercenary act was called into question when William Hill reported several bets on a streaker appearing during the finals.

The All England Club had a strange response to the interloper. "We have never had a streaker on Centre Court before, so I suppose it was inevitable eventually," a spokesperson said. "Whilst we do not wish to condone the practice, it did at least provide some light amusement for our loyal and patient supporters, who have had a trying time during the recent bad weather."

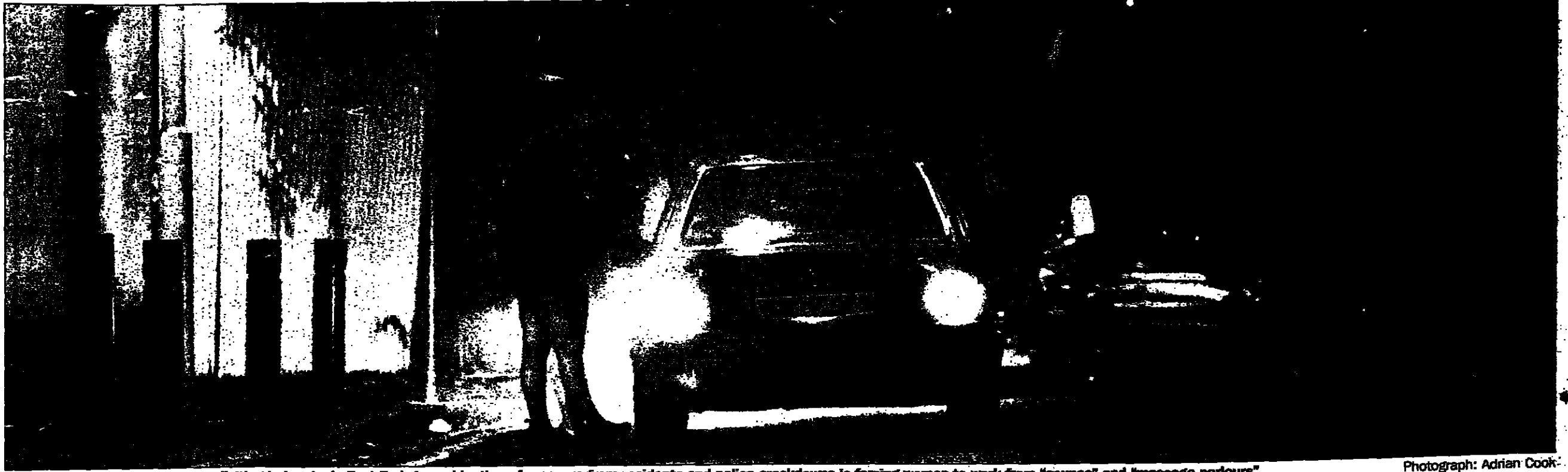
CONTENTS

Section 1	
BUSINESS	17-19
COMMENT	13-15
CROSSWORD	20
LEADING ARTICLES	13
LETTERS	16
OBITUARIES	16
SCIENCE	20
SHARES	17
Section 2	
ARTS	26,27
DO WE NEED?	8,25
FAMILY LIFE	6,7
LIVINGS	28,29
LIVING	4,5
NETWORK	9-18
TV & RADIO	31,32
WEATHER	29



news

Streetwalkers' profession on its last legs



Trade of disrepute: Prostitutes soliciting in London's East End. A combination of pressure from residents and police crackdowns is forcing women to work from "saunas" and "massage parlours"

Photograph: Adrian Cook

Kerb crawlers face tougher penalties

Street prostitutes are on the decline as an increasing number of women ply their trade in "saunas" and from rented flats, according to research.

The number of streetwalkers may have dropped by half in the past decade, believes one expert.

The shift away from the streets is likely to be hastened by a report today by an all-party group of MPs calling for a crackdown on kerb crawlers.

The Parliamentary Group on Prostitution and Police want to introduce powers of arrest against kerb crawlers and new penalties against "cruisers" who drive around red-light districts, without stopping. They also urge alternative sanctions against kerb crawlers including endorsing driving licenses and forcing them to do community service.

As street prostitutes come under increasing pressure from residents and vice squads, there has been an increase in

"saunas" and massage parlours to which police tend to turn a blind eye and in the numbers of calling cards in telephone boxes used to advertise the services of women in private flats.

For a forthcoming book, *Prostitution and Public Policy*, by Catharine Benson and Roger Matthews, of Middlesex University, about 100 prostitutes

Reports: Jason Bennetto

and 50 clients were interviewed in cities including Nottingham, Leicester and Norwich. Researchers found a slump in the number of street workers and little cross over between types of prostitutes; women who worked the street found it very difficult to move into saunas.

Dr Matthews said: "In the last few years the number of women on the street have probably halved. It is being seen as increasingly dangerous work."

As an example he said in areas such as Streatham and Tooting Bec, south London, in the 1980s there were about 140 prostitutes, but now due to campaigns by residents and police crackdowns they have been reduced to about 20. The research also found that kerb crawlers were not deterred by fines, only publicity.

These trends confirmed an earlier study of police vice squads, also by Dr Matthews and Ms Benson, in which officers often stated that their main priorities were to "clean up the streets - not to police sex".

Nationally, the number of prostitutes prosecuted has fallen from 9,196 in 1988 to 7,912 in 1993 while kerb crawlers prosecuted had risen from 622 in 1988 to 857 in 1993.

Police officers are frustrated at what they believe is weak legislation and soft penalties. There is no power of arrest on kerb crawlers.



Fantasy girl: Actress Cathy Tyson in the film *Mona Lisa*

Poverty and humiliation following the footsteps of Jack the Ripper

It was a warm Thursday night and the coach party of middle-aged women, dressed in blazers and cardigans, chatted excitedly as their guide took them on the ever-popular Jack the Ripper tour.

The group had just finished visiting the Whitechapel area of east London to see where, in 1888, five Victorian prostitutes had their throats slit and bodies savagely mutilated.

Less than three minutes' walk away from the tour party, down a dark side street, Rosie, 32, a mother of four, was offering full sex for £15. Extras were £5 each.

She planned to make £55 that night. "I need to buy two pairs of shoes for my girls and some extra to go towards the court fines," she explained. On average she makes £500 a week. Her husband is in jail for burglary.

She has been on the street for three years, but would rather work from a sauna or club. "It's dangerous on the street - I got



Women on the streets: A Victorian viewpoint

raped within six months of working down here," she said. "I got into a car with this guy and there was another guy waiting who put a knife to my throat and a gun to my head. I tried struggling, but I thought it's not worth getting killed for. They both raped me, took my money, then blacked my eye and

fractured my jaw. Afterwards I told them I had Aids to scare them - but I don't, I'm clean."

"When I went to the police they were really nice at first, but when I told them I was a prostitute they said 'sorry love there's nothing we can do' and showed me out."

Rosie said she got "nicked" about once a week and was usually fined £50 each time. "It means I have to go back on the street to get the money."

At 10pm on Thursday, a constant dribble of punters trawled up and down her road. Some were in cars that drove slowly past, others were on foot. There were middle-aged businessmen, swaying slightly in their suits, stopping to talk before moving on. "Have you decided yet, shouted one woman. "No, I'm still looking," came the reply.

A young Bengali man spoke briefly to a woman before they both went into a darkened car park. Another prostitute joked with a youngish white man,

clad in denim. Ten minutes later they emerged from a side street. She yelled at a friend as she finished pulling down her short skirt.

Angela, who looked worn and weary for 35, has been working Whitechapel since 1990 and has seen prices slump. "Some girls will do it for £10 or even less - they're so desperate to make enough to pay their pimps."

She said more women were moving into the area, after being forced out of other parts of London, and that up to 20 prostitutes now worked the patch. In a night she can make from £50 to £200, but she said a lot more girls worked in clubs now. "It's getting dangerous on the streets, girls get mugged and attacked by punters and crackheads and pimps try to muscle in."

At that point, a muscular man emerged from the shadows. He wanted to know whether there was a problem. There was no problem, Angela was happy to talk briefly for £10.

'With a prostitute it's pure sex'

"It's easier to ask a prostitute to do things because she's there to service you, you know you're paying her for the service. It's like going to have your car done, you tell them what you want done, they don't ask... if they don't do it, you go down the road to someone else."

This is the view of a man who

regularly pays women for sex, who is among a group of prostitutes' clients interviewed in a new study of Glasgow prostitutes and their clients.

Half of the 143 men questioned were married or living with their partner. One man had been paying for sex from the same woman for more than 13

years - longer than he had been married.

One of the key attractions of using prostitutes, the men said, was that they "could ask [them] to do anything". One man said: "My wife is not very interested in anything other than straight sex and with a prostitute the world is your oyster."

For some the appeal was the opportunity to have sex with a number of women, and many were attracted by the uninvolved nature of the contact. "If I go to a club or something I have to work for it but with a prostitute it's pure sex, no-one's kidding the other."

When asked what would happen if their partner found out about their activities, most of the men, whose average age was 36 with the youngest being 21 and the oldest 63, said it would be disastrous: "It would probably end our marriage," said one.

Researchers obtained interviews from nine men by approaching them on the street, 68 who were contacted via health clinics, and a further 66 who responded to advertisements in a local newspaper.

Most of the men said they had paid for vaginal sex; 89 had paid for masturbation, 87 for oral sex, 11 for anal sex. Seventeen men said they had not used a condom on the last occasion they paid for vaginal sex and 14 said their condom burst.

Of 66 women interviewed, on one night they were found to have had vaginal sex 147 times, oral sex 200 times and carried out masturbation on 58 occasions.

■ *Sex Work on the Streets*: Neil McKeganey and Marina Barnard; Open University Press; £12.99

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Confrontation as marching season begins

Loyalist fury as police mount roadblock to keep Orangemen out of a Catholic district. David McKittrick reports

Thousands of police and Orangemen found themselves locked in impasse yesterday in the Co Armagh countryside after an Orange march was prevented from parading through a Catholic district.

With tension mounting, the scene at Drumcree, just outside Portadown, looked set for a re-run of last year's stand-off at the same spot. On that occasion, the

RUC and thousands of Orangemen remained in confrontation for three days before a compromise was reached.

In one brief skirmish during the afternoon, several stones were thrown and a number of punches aimed at police. But otherwise the situation, though uneasy, was largely peaceful.

Unionist politicians, including Unionist leader David Trim-

ble and the Rev Ian Paisley, who were at the scene, said they were determined that the march should go ahead along its traditional route through the Catholic Garvaghy Road district. Local Orange leader Harold Gracey said they would remain at Drumcree "for as long as it takes".

He told the crowd: "Dublin has given orders for this. We will

not be giving in to Dick Spring, John Bruton, Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness or any other spokesman for Jesuit priests."

There were reports that Orangemen from other parts of Northern Ireland were being summoned to the scene, and that plans had been made for marches and protests in other areas.

During the day, Mr Trimble

and Mr Paisley spoke to senior police officers at the scene. Mr Trimble warned that Sir Hugh Annesley, the Chief Constable of the RUC, was "foolish" in gambling with the peace in Northern Ireland. He said a lengthy stand-off at Drumcree could shatter the tranquillity of past months, leading to a breach of the loy-

alist ceasefire or being used by the IRA as an excuse to resume their campaign in Ulster.

During the morning, a thousand Orangemen had marched from Portadown to a service at Drumcree parish church by an uncontentious rural route. On Saturday, however, the RUC had announced that because of the possibility of disorder they would not be allowed to march

back into the town via Garvaghy Road.

In a symbolic protest after attending the service the Orangemen marched to within a few inches of a line of police officers who stood in front of a dozen Land-Rovers which had been drawn up to block the narrow country road. They then turned and marched back to the church leaving several dozen

Orangemen face to face with the RUC.

The scene was surrounded by a huge security presence with dozens of Land-Rovers parked in the vicinity and British troops in the background.

Police erected a fence of razor-wire, topped with a white warning ribbon, across fields to prevent any attempts by protesters to outflank RUC lines.

Unionists march to the music of time

Ceasefires and other huge historical changes may come in and out of fashion in Northern Ireland, but the marching season, it seems, goes on forever.

Both the unionist and nationalist cultures have strong traditions of holding parades and rallies, but the Protestants have shown a particular appetite for taking to the streets.

The marching season is not now just an adjunct to unionism, but a central part of it.

When serious disorder broke out six times in Ulster between 1857 and 1886, the reports of all six commissions of inquiry blamed two main factors - poor policing and Orange parades.

One of the reports said the [July 12] occasion was used "to remind one party of the triumph of their ancestors over those of the other, and to inculcate the feelings of Protestant superiority over their Roman Catholic neighbours". July 12 is the date William of Orange won the Battle of the Boyne.

The strength of feeling the marching season generates on both sides is difficult for outsiders to comprehend.

In 1920, a London newspaper: "The thrill which the genuine Orangeman finds in those demonstrations cannot be communicated to the most impressionable stranger, however devoted he may be to the British Empire. The relief which Ulster still feels at the liberation bought on the Boyne 230 years ago is unfathomable to an outsider: but these things are all very real to Orangemen."

The Sixties saw Catholics taking to the streets for civil rights marches on the model of those led in the US by Martin Luther King.

But within a short space of time, loyalist counter-demonstrations appeared and there were ugly clashes.

It was a unionist march in the city of Londonderry in August 1969 which resulted in the widespread disorder that led to the first deployment of British troops on the streets.

Since then, marches and parades have periodically been the occasion of disturbances.

Northern Ireland hosts around 3,500 marches a year. Around 600 have no political or sectarian overtones. About 300 are organised by nationalists and republicans. The majority of marches are staged by loyalist groupings, principally the Orange Order.

Recent statistics have shown that the number of loyalist parades has risen steeply, going up by almost a third over the past decade. Virtually all of these take place in what is called the marching season, which lasts from Easter to September,



The Grand Master of the Orange Order, the Rev Martin Smyth MP, asking police to lift their Portadown blockade yesterday



March past: Orangemen in 1970 marching to hear the Rev Ian Paisley making a speech in east Belfast

reaching high points in mid-July and mid-August. The vast majority of these pass off peacefully, but each year a small number generate controversy and sometimes violence.

The two principal flashpoints in recent years have become Drumcree at Portadown, Co Armagh, and the Lower Ormeau Rd, south Belfast.

Both of these are Catholic enclaves surrounded by Protestant areas. In both cases, Catholic protests mean that the marchers are accompanied by a strong police presence.

The clash of perspectives between the Protestant marchers and the Catholic residents was

summarised in a recent report by academics Neil Jarman and Dominic Bryan.

"Each parade which is challenged is a symbolic threat to Protestant security and the Unionist position," noted the report, "while each parade which passes through a nationalist area is a re-statement of the dominance of the Protestant community and the inferiority of nationalist rights."

While such parades increase local tensions, they are often at their most dangerous when they assume a wider political significance.

Some of the most violent clashes came in the mid-Eigh-

ties as loyalists protested against the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Last year in Portadown, 800 marchers were allowed to pass through the Catholic district after three-day stand-off between Orangemen and the RUC. This was seen as a major victory by the Orange Order.

In Northern Ireland, July is, at the best of times, a month associated with a general rise in nervous tension.

But a "bad" marching season can sour the atmosphere, play on the most sensitive nerve-endings of the two communities and seriously damage the prospects for political progress.

Bowler hats, sashes and a ritual of state

The Order was founded in 1795 following a major sectarian affray in County Armagh. This clash, known now as "the Battle of the Diamond," is one of the major events in Orange folk-history, together with two incidents in the 17th century when Protestants prevailed over Catholics, the battle of the Boyne and the siege of Derry. The Order has gone through many phases in its history - some more respectable than others - but for more than a century it has functioned in essence as a pan-Protestant front, helping to unify various strands within Unionism. Its leaders deny any suggestion that it is anti-Catholic, but the movement has been consistently anti-ecumenical and opposed to religious integration.

While its regulations tell members to abstain from un-

charitable words, actions, or sentiments against Catholics, they are pledged to "resist the ascendancy of that church" by lawful means. They are also warned not to attend "any act or ceremony of Popish worship". A number have been disciplined for doing so.

During the half-century of Unionist rule in Northern Ireland, between the 1920s and 1970s, most Unionist ministers and MPs were members of the Order. Unionist administrations facilitated Orange marches and Unionist politicians routinely addressed gatherings.

This close identification of Unionist governments with the Order tended to fortify the deep belief that Orange marches had a special status. During this period, Orange marches were rarely re-routed while nationalist or republican parades,

in any event much less frequent, were often subject to restrictions or bans.

Major Orange occasions thus became what one commentator described as "effectively a ritual of state". The Orange Order is considered by many to be a powerful and exclusive body in the Province, with its members wearing the traditional bowler hats, orange sashes and carrying rolled umbrellas during marches.

The Order originates from the Dutch royal House of Orange and symbolises the Protestant king William III - William of Orange - who defeated the Catholic James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. Marching banners boast the victory of their King Billy - and ever since the battle has been the symbol of Protestant sympathies in Northern Ireland.

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news

Airline's cigarette that doesn't smoke is ready for take-off

DANNY GOLDUP and
CHRISTIAN WOLMAR

A small German airline with a non-smoking policy is giving nicotine-addicted passengers an odourless, smokeless type of cigarette to see them through the flight. If the tests are successful, the manufacturers plan to market them in the

United Kingdom for use on airlines.

Augsberg Airlines, which flies on a number of internal German routes, is test-marketing the cigarettes for the Reynolds Tobacco company, manufacturers of the cigarettes which glow when lit.

It does not give off smoke or ash, but the glowing tip of the

cigarette consists of a type of coal which heats the air gently. This hot air releases the flavour - but after six to eight minutes, the cigarette loses the taste and must be put out.

The cigarettes contain only 0.2mg of nicotine and 3mg of tar, compared to, say, Benson & Hedges, which have 0.9mg of nicotine and 7mg of tar. The cig-

arettes come in two flavours, menthol and original.

Reynolds say that the cigarettes have been tested independently by the government in Germany, which has found no problems with them.

The cigarette is also scheduled to be tested in the United States, Sweden, and if they

prove successful will be tried in the UK.

The cigarettes are being described by Augsberg Airlines as a "smokeless, odourless cigarette" and are handed out to customers for free. The company says its air hostesses have to be "briefed on how to light the cigarette before take-off" because they contain

"glowing ash like coal which give off hot air".

An airline spokeswoman told the *Independent* that it handed out questionnaires to the passengers and "the cigarettes have had a positive response with non-smokers, who have not been affected by them in any way". She said that a passenger sitting next to a smoker may not

even realise the person was smoking.

However, she said that some smokers had complained that they were "not enamoured with the taste".

She added: "We are not advocating smoking in any way. The airline is not advertising the cigarettes at all, but Reynolds are promoting them."

The anti-smoking group, ASH, was critical of the experiment. A spokeswoman said: "We see these cigarettes as undermining the government's campaign against smoking. The cigarettes may actually contain more carbon monoxide than normal cigarettes, so may prove to be more harmful than others."

University challenge: Attempt to curb brain drain

Oxford doubles professors and joins rat race

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Oxford University announced yesterday that it was appointing 162 new professors without paying them more money or changing their jobs.

The appointments, which almost double the number of Oxford professors, aim to stop the flight of senior dons to chairs in younger and less famous universities. Dons had to nominate themselves for the right to call themselves professor, and a Distinctions Committee of 14 eminent academics passed judgement on their application.

The university has succumbed to pressure to abandon its egalitarian tradition as a "community of scholars" and joined the rat race, in which academics say they need titles to compete for research funds.

Of the university's 1262 dons, 361 are now professors. The committee also awarded the title of reader, the next rung down the ladder, to 99 academics, bringing their numbers to 206.

The overall success rate was 79 per cent for men and 85 per cent for women.

Oxford has been forced to respond to the new culture in higher education in which university funding depends partly on its research strengths.

The newest universities, the

former polytechnics, have been offering big salaries and chairs in the battle to improve their research ratings.

Dr Paul Slack, chairman of the university's general board, said: "The purpose of this exercise was to give appropriate recognition to the outstanding quality of the academics in this university, despite financial pressures which prevent us from increasing the number of stipendiary professors."

Applicants were judged on the quality of research compared with that of professors and readers in other major universities and on the quality of their teaching and administration. Flair in teaching could compensate for weaknesses in research.

Dons were split over the plan when it was proposed a year ago. Some feared it might damage undergraduate teaching because dons would concentrate on research in their effort to be promoted.

The university is anxious to demonstrate that it has been fair to women, after female dons three years ago blocked plans to create 15 new professorships, as they would most likely be taken by men.

In the most recent exercise, 15 per cent of the successful applicants were women - exactly in line with the percentage of female applicants.

In 1989, there were four women professors at Oxford compared with the present 30. The latest appointments mean that both the number of women readers and professors will more than double.

Dr Slack said: "Very careful attention was naturally paid to equal opportunity issues and I am delighted to see the distinction of a significant number of women being properly recognised."

This year's exercise will be repeated annually and dons will again be able to nominate themselves.

Four thousand teachers face the sack this year because of Government spending cuts, according to a survey published today. Warnings of dismissal have been sent out to teachers by one in ten schools, says the 150,000-strong Association of Teachers and Lecturers.

The figures challenge ministers' claims that schools received a much more generous settlement this year than last, when, 5,000 teachers lost their jobs.

Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education, said last November that she was increasing funds for schools by £878m, a 4.5 per cent increase in the schools budget, to fulfil the Prime Minister's pledge that education was at the top of the Government's priorities.



Old currency: A Mondex card being used in Swindon. A lack of takers has ended the experiment with 'electronic cash'

Photograph: John Lawrence

Cashless society stops at Swindon

CHARLES ARTHUR
Science Editor

It was hailed as the beginning of the end for the pound in your pocket. But the experiment in "electronic cash" has failed to find many buyers and looks unlikely to spread past Swindon.

A year after its launch, the town of 170,000 is still the only place in the world where you can buy a drink in a pub using a microchip.

Despite the enthusiasm of Mondex, a consortium of the National Westminster and Midland banks and British Telecom, it said yesterday that the experiment will not be extended to any other town in Britain. Instead it will be tried in universities and other "closed environments".

A limited Mondex trial is under way in San Francisco, where it is being used by some bank employees, and others are planned for Ontario, Hong Kong and an Australian city. Swindon, though, remains the most ambitious of the trials.

A Mondex spokesman said: "I think people would like to be

able to use their Mondex cards outside Swindon. But there's no other place like it."

The trial began with 500 people using "smart cards" which stored money in the form of electronic digits on a microchip.

Rather than carrying cash, cardholders could load up their cards with money from their bank accounts using special readers attached to a phone. They could spend it in shops, or pass it to other people who also had cards. The transactions are anonymous, just like cash.

Each card can hold an unlimited amount of money, though not a negative amount.

However, despite Mondex's early forecasts that 40,000 of the town's 170,000 population might use the cards by today,

in fact only 10,000 have done so.

Neil McEvoy, director of the management consultancy Hyperion, which has been working with Mondex on the project, said: "I think the problem was that for the things where it's really useful, such as for bus fares and car parks - where change is too troublesome - the facilities weren't available until about six months ago."

"By then, people had probably thrown away the stuff explaining how they could get into the trial."

But retailers who offer facilities to accept the cards say that it provides benefits over cash. "For us, it's super," said Paul Notton, co-owner of Rud's bar and restaurant in Swindon. "It's very good for the

sort of trade we have. Cash can go missing. In the last three months we've seen it become more popular."

"People use it for transactions of anywhere between £5 and £30. If all the banks used it, that would be very good."

"From our point of view it means we don't have to go to the bank to get change. But like most new things, it's hard to envisage how it might be used at first."

He says there are about 80 Mondex transactions each week, forming about 2 per cent of the total volume.

Agnes Doding, at the Heart in Hand pub, said: "We get a steady stream of regulars using it. If everybody used it, that would be nice, because we wouldn't have to cash up."



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news

Farm for rent, would suit time traveller

NICHOLAS SCHOON
Environment Correspondent

Wanted: one tenant for a farm that time forgot. In the Nottinghamshire village of Laxton, the medieval pattern of crop rotation and communal farming survives. Thanks to various accidents of history, the parish still has three large fields divided into 164 small strips.

In each strip, Laxton's 18 farmers plant winter-sown wheat one year and a spring-sown crop such as barley the next. In the third year, the field used to be left fallow to recover its fertility before the cycle restarted, but these days grass is grown to provide hay.

The three crops rotate round the fields.

This is a pattern that was found across England 600 years ago. It required much co-operation between the farmers and the maintenance of precise boundaries without the use of

fences and hedges. All this was regulated by manorial courts, which had substantial powers to punish transgressors.

In Tudor times, the larger and more influential landlords and tenant farmers consolidated the tiny, dispersed holdings into fields surrounded by hedges.

In the 18th century, new farming systems and advances in farm machinery propelled enclosure, keeping lawyers and surveyors busy and converting a large part of the English peasantry into landless farm labourers and factory fodder for the Industrial Revolution.

Laxton, which once overlooked the mighty Sherwood Forest, also had its open land nibbled away into enclosures over the years. But while enclosure of the entire parish was considered several times, it never happened because the two major landowners, Earl Manvers and the Earl of Scar-

borough, could not agree on how it should be done.

Finally, soon after the turn of the century, local leaders and farmers began to realise that something unique and precious had survived; interest in conserving Laxton's fields began.

The Ministry of Agriculture bought the freehold in 1952 and became lord of the manor. In 1981 the land was passed to the Government's Crown Estate.

One of the tenants, Ernest Kent, has died, and the estate is looking for someone who will adhere to the old ways.

Tenant Reginald Rose, 70, has traced his ancestors in Laxton back to 1434 and is Clerk to the Guts and Commons in the Court Leet. He admitted the new tenant might have trouble making a living with such a small holding, but hoped that could be overcome.

"We can see the day coming when we will all have to diversify," he said.



Throwback to medieval days: Laxton village still adheres to the old principles of communal farming and crop rotation

Photograph by Tom Pison

Range of charities 'should be widened'

Human rights organisations such as Amnesty International should be given the same charitable status as animal groups like the RSPCA, according to a report published today.

The report, by an independent commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector, said a new legal definition of charity based on 21st century ideas of public benefit was urgently needed. "The present situation does not make sense to the public and those organisations failing to qualify for legal definition as a charity miss out on advantages such as tax benefits."

"And where applications for charitable status are turned down, small grassroots organisations lack the time, resources and know-how to challenge decisions in the courts."

The call came amid concern that too many voluntary groups were excluded from charitable status under current law, including human rights organisations.

The study stresses the importance of protecting the independence of charities and other voluntary and community organisations. Radical changes have meant that national and local government have increasingly turned to voluntary organisations to provide services. Further changes in the system of providing welfare, the structure of the family, and continuing high unemployment are also set to have a big impact on the sector.

Professor Nicholas Deakin,

commission chairman, said: "It would be fatal for the voluntary sector to be seen as an arm of government, and it certainly must never be seen to be used to carry out functions which are properly the role of the state."

The report, the first of its kind for 10 years, also calls for a Voluntary Sector Commissioner at the Law Commission to keep charity and voluntary sector law under review. An expert Charity Appeal Tribunal should also be set up to review Charity Commission decisions.

The report notes how there are 240,000 voluntary bodies in England, including 116,000 registered charities. The sector has an income of £15 billion and 620,000 employees.

The Commission calls for voluntary groups to be managed efficiently, without deflecting from their purposes and aims. The report warns groups must be more accountable and claims some make no effort to involve service users. Organisations must be ready to "practise what they preach". Too many trustee boards or committees are dominated by "middle-aged white professionals".

Among its other recommendations, the 13-member commission calls for changes in the way National Lottery cash grants are made. These would include safeguards preventing grants being a substitute for Government handouts, and extend support to self-help groups.

Polly Toynbee, page 15



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D-day for nuclear arms powers

The World Court will this morning announce its verdict on the most politically explosive question ever put to any court. Is it legal to use, or threaten to use, nuclear weapons? Whichever way it decides – and the decision is balanced on a knife edge – will have profound consequences for global security and for the United Nations.

If, in its 150-page opinion, the International Court of Justice in the Hague declines to make a ruling or rules it is permissible to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons, or if it produces a "fudge", it will damage the court's legitimacy. Its judges will be accused of kowtowing to the five nuclear powers which are all permanent members of the UN Security Council. A ruling that nuclear weapons are legal would also open the way for other states to possess and test them, undermining the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and attempts to conclude a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

If the court rules the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons to be illegal, the policy of deterrence upon which US,

The World Court is due to make a landmark judgment that could outlaw deterrence. **Christopher Bellamy reports**

British and French security and, to a lesser extent, that of Russia and China have rested for decades will be in violation of international law. Nuclear deterrence is the policy of Britain's present Conservative government and, Tony Blair said two weeks ago, of a future Labour government.

Such a ruling would also challenge the legal status of the five permanent members of the Security Council, whose membership is rooted in their possession of nuclear weapons. It would strengthen demands that other criteria should determine permanent membership – such as economic strength or contributions to UN peace-keeping operations.

There would be other implications, thrown into sharper focus by the forthcoming 50th anniversary of the Nuremberg trial verdicts. If the use of nuclear weapons is declared illegal, the captain of a Trident submarine ordered to fire a

nuclear missile will know that if he does so he can be indicted for a war crime.

The use of chemical weapons is now illegal, even in self-defence, and so are biological

'Banning nuclear weapons is a problem because they are crucial to the defence of certain states'

weapons – bacteria and viruses. So are laser weapons designed to blind people. There has been prolonged debate about outlawing land mines. But nuclear weapons remain outside and above the law.

On 15 December 1994 the UN General Assembly decided,

by a clear majority, to ask the court – the world's supreme judicial body – whether "the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is in any circumstance permitted under international law?". It is the first time non-governmental organisations have persuaded the General Assembly to use the World Court as an avenue to challenge the Security Council. It is also the first time the court has been asked to give its opinion on the legality of any weapon.

Most members of the UN believe nuclear weapons should be banned. Some 45 states gave evidence, two thirds arguing for illegality. Four of the five nuclear weapons states gave evidence: China declined.

The move to declare nuclear weapons illegal has been problematic, partly because they are crucial to the defence policy of certain states, and partly because they share certain characteristics – destruction by heat and blast – with conventional

weapons. The move to declare them illegal has centred on other characteristics: the destruction caused by radiation and electromagnetic pulse, and their long-term damage on health and the environment.

The Nato nuclear states and Russia tried to dissuade the court from ruling on the question, pointing out that it was, in France's words, "an essential problem... one which is at the core of the national defence systems of a large number of states". France is probably the most strident opponent of the action. Britain also wants the court to decline a ruling.

The court's decision, expected at about 11am today, could go either way. The World Court should comprise 15 judges but, following the death of one, there are only 14. Those representing the five nuclear powers and two others are expected to support the legality of nuclear weapons in certain circumstances, and seven to oppose it. The President – an Algerian judge – has a second, deciding vote and the court's ruling may depend on this.

The official British view, cited by the former Foreign Office legal adviser, Sir Vincent Evans, is that the use of nuclear weapons may or may not be legal depending on the circumstances. However, Sir Vincent has said, the more you examine the circumstances, the more you are driven back to a general principle.

Dame Rosalyn Higgins, the new British judge, said recently: "To my knowledge governments do not at all try to influence the judges in cases before the court in which their national interests are deemed to be at stake. Indeed, it is when a case from one's own country is before the court that the judges are most sensitive to demonstrate their independence."

It is possible the court will fudge the issue by, for example, ruling only that the international laws of armed conflict apply to nuclear weapons. That would satisfy the British, who believe that the legality depends on the circumstances. But such a ruling would do nothing for the image of the World Court.



Under a cloud: Security Council members oppose a ban

SIGNIFICANT SHORTS

Jacques Chirac urged Israel to disclose whether it intends to pursue the Middle East peace process, saying that uncertainty over the prospects for peace encouraged political violence. "If Israel decides to pursue the peace process, I hope it will say so as quickly as possible... It is obvious that uncertainty will lead to a resumption of terrorism," the French President told reporters yesterday during an official visit to Saudi Arabia. *Agencies*

Ecuadorian voters were choosing yesterday between two bitter enemies for president. Rights' Jaime Nebot, of the Social Christian party, and populist Abdala Bucaram, of the Roldosista party received the most votes in a first round of balloting on May 19, with 27 percent for Nebot and 26 percent for Bucaram. *Quito, AP*

Polish leaders voiced their nation's shame and grief yesterday in the southern town of Kielce where, half a century ago, a mob killed 42 Jews who had escaped death in the Holocaust. Prime Minister Wlodzislaw Cimoszewicz underlined the horror of the 1946 massacre, which followed the Nazi slaughter of most of Poland's 3.5 million Jews during the Second World War. *Kielce, Reuters*

Tropical Storm Bertha swirled towards the Caribbean yesterday, and hurricane warnings were in effect for the Leeward Islands, stretching from Dominica north to Anguilla and Saint Martin. A hurricane watch was issued for Puerto Rico, the US and British Virgin Islands, and Guadeloupe. *Miami, Reuters*

Pope John Paul II appealed for Christian unity with a celebration of Mass in the Byzantine rite at St Peter's yesterday. He was marking the fourth centenary of the 1596 Union of Brest, the Ukrainian Catholic Church's restoration of ties with Rome. The Polish Pontiff, 76, joined the frail 81-year-old leader of the Ukrainian Church, Cardinal Myroslav Ivan Lubachivsky, in the elaborate three-hour ceremony. *Vatican City, Reuters*

The space shuttle Columbia broke the record for the longest shuttle flight yesterday when it touched down after a 17-day mission. Columbia broke the record of 16 days, 15 hours set by her sister ship, Endeavour, on a 1995 astronomy mission. By the time the shuttle touched down it had secured the record by almost seven hours. During the flight, Columbia was the scene of a \$138m research programme that focused on the effects of space travel on the human body. *Cape Canaveral, Reuters*

Much of South Africa was covered in snow yesterday as a cold front pushing up from the south sent temperatures plunging. A low of -12C was recorded at Lady Grey in Free State province. Snow fell up to four inches deep in places. In Kroonstad in Free State province, two inches of snow fell overnight, the South African Broadcasting Corporation reported. The last such snowfall there was in 1963. *Johannesburg, AP*

Covert surveillance under the Clinton administration has sharply increased, the *Washington Post* reported. The increased use of federal telephone wire-taps and other electronic surveillance had been driven by stepped-up use of electronic eavesdropping against drugs traffickers, the newspaper said. The article reported that the number of wire-taps had risen to 672 last year and almost certainly would exceed 700 in 1996. The figures did not include "national security" wire-tap orders, obtained under intelligence legislation, which also had been rising dramatically, it said. *Reuters, Washington*

Four alleged graffiti writers from Germany were arrested in the Bronx, putting an end to their plans to paint the town, police said. Vandal squad officers found them in possession of about two dozen cans of paint. A detective who tracks graffiti gangs in the city said international vandalism tours were becoming increasingly popular, with European vandals hitting property in New York and local vandals travelling to Europe. *New York, AP*

Voters in Niger went to the polls to choose between the country's first democratically elected president and the military ruler who ousted him in a coup. The National Electoral Commission had demanded that the elections be postponed, but military ruler General Ibrahim Maïnassara insisted that the vote go forward. His leading opponent is Mahamane Ousmane, who was elected in Niger's first democratic vote three years ago. *Namney, AP*

A German with an artificial heart has set a world record for longevity by surviving two years with the device. The artificial heart given to Reiner Hege, 37, of Magdeburg, has helped clear up his illness to such an extent that he will not need a transplant. The previous record listed in the *Guinness Book of World Records* was set by an American who survived 620 days. *Berlin, Reuters*

A Turkish-Cypriot political columnist was shot dead by gunmen outside his house. Kutlu Adali, a leftist intellectual, wrote for the *Yeni Duzen* daily in the breakaway Turkish republic in the north. The journalist, who sometimes attacked political figures in his columns, had reportedly received death threats. *Nicosia, AP*



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DAU Summit: Deal sought to prevent bloodshed and chaos Burundi peace force to stave off collapse

DAVID ORR

With the memory of the failed African peace-keeping mission in Liberia fresh in their minds, the continent's leaders must now consider the prospects for bringing peace to another war-torn African nation: Burundi. The tiny central-African state will be top of the agenda at the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) summit which opens in Cameroon today.

Proposals for a regional security force to put an end to fighting between rebels from the Hutu majority and the largely Tutsi army are currently the best, and perhaps the only, hope for Burundi. The country risks being engulfed by full-scale ethnic conflict similar to that which caused the deaths of up to one million people in neighbouring Rwanda two years ago. Already, some one thousand people are killed in Burundi every month.

The plan for deploying a multinational peace-keeping

force in Burundi poses a credibility test for the pan-African body regarded by many as a well-intentioned, but ultimately ineffectual talking shop. And the OAU cannot escape the fact that even with its approval for a regional military force, peace efforts might be forestalled by events taking place in Burundi's capital, Bujumbura.

After prolonged resistance to outside intervention, Burundi's leaders recently reached a decision at a peace summit in Tanzania. The Prime Minister, Antoine Nduwayo, a member of the powerful Tutsi minority, and the President, Sylvestre Ntibunganga, a Hutu, agreed that the time had come to accept "security assistance".

The Prime Minister's acceptance of the Western-backed intervention plan was seen as a breakthrough. Only last month, the prospect of an army coup to block foreign involvement seemed a real possibility.

But, by the time of last month's summit of six region-

al nations, it had become clear that Burundi's army was no longer able to contain the crisis which has turned some parts of the country into virtual no-go areas for the government. The Prime Minister and Defence Minister were obliged to accept the view of former Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere, who has been chairing peace talks under an international mandate: only foreign intervention can now prevent Burundi from spiralling into further chaos and bloodshed.

Under the terms of the plan, an East African force of Ugandans, Tanzanians and Ethiopians will endeavour to restore peace to the stricken nation.

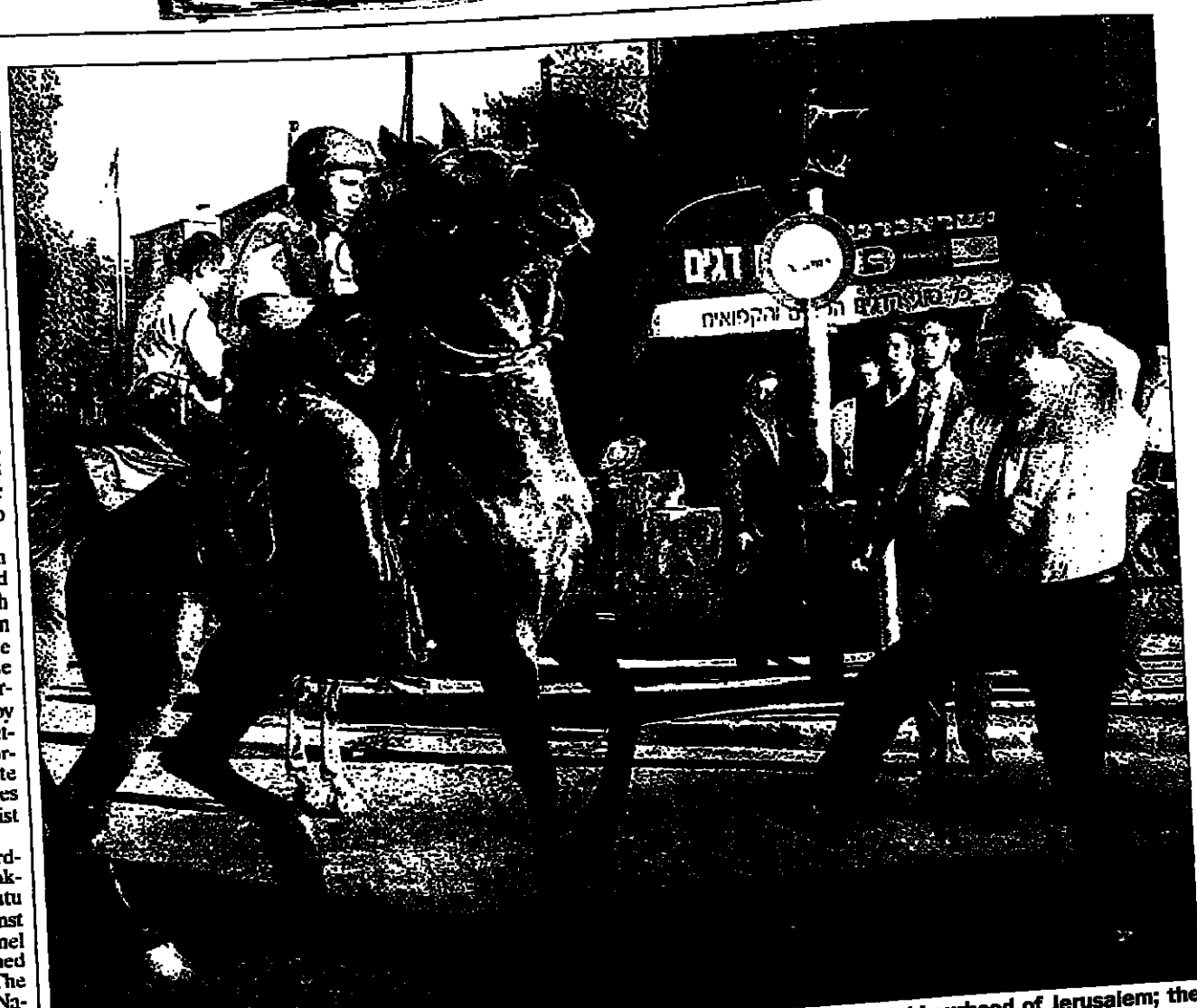
The force's mission would be to protect politicians, civil servants and strategic installations. It would also help to retrain the largely Tutsi security forces which are locked in conflict with Hutu rebels.

Despite his endorsement of the peace plan, however, Mr. Nduwayo may not have done

enough to appease hardliners in his own community. In recent days, Mr Nduwayo has come under mounting pressure to renounce the initiative.

The Prime Minister's own Upronsa party has dismissed the plan as amounting to "high treason". University students in Bujumbura have taken to the streets to protest against the proposals which could see foreign troops inside Burundi by the end of this month. And Tutsi extremists, among them former president Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, have called for strikes and civil disobedience to resist such a deployment.

In an ironic twist, Tutsi hardliners now find themselves taking the same line as their Hutu rebel foes who are also against foreign intervention. Colonel Bagaza has warned of "armed resistance" to outsiders. The main Hutu rebel group, the National Council for the Defence of Democracy, says it too will regard peace-keepers as a hostile invasion force.



Confrontation: An ultra-Orthodox Jew in a clash with Israeli police in a religious neighbourhood of Jerusalem; the ultra-Orthodox were demanding the closure of a main street for the Jewish sabbath - Shabbat. Photograph: AFP

Slowing to the pace of a slug in a tropical storm as life speeds by

ROME DAYS

Excuse me if this piece sounds a bit lethargic, but I've been having a bit of trouble getting out of bed recently. Actually, even once I'm up it seems like a titanic struggle to get to the office. And now that I am finally here there are so many distractions - telephones ringing, colleagues inviting me out for coffee, chat about this and that and nothing in particular. Life just seems to speed by without anything ever getting done.

I would put this feeling down to my own incorrigible tendency to laziness, except for one small comforting thought - it seems to be happening to everyone around here. I don't know what it is about Rome, but it has this

habit of causing all who set eyes on it to slow down to the pace of a slug in a tropical rainstorm.

Even the most brilliant of my friends and acquaintances take several hours over coffee, newspapers or computer games to prepare themselves for their remarkably short, if intense, daily bursts of creativity. Government ministries, which provide steady jobs for tens of thousands of Roman families, are notorious for their absenteeism, late arrivals, early departures and extended breaks.

At the Italian newspaper where I work, whole mornings of conferencing give way to lengthy working lunches, followed by afternoons of newspaper-reading and leisurely telephone calls. The panic sets in around six o'clock - at about the same time that British newspapers are getting ready to wrap up their first editions.

Now that July has arrived, police are out prowling the streets to ensure those shop-owners ordered to stay open for the holiday period don't pull

down their shutters and sneak off to the beach. But even the police tire quickly; the traffic wardens employed to keep non-resident drivers out of the city centre during daylight hours often disappear from their posts around lunchtime.

Any excuse not to work seems just fine, whether it is an obscure saint's day or someone's mother's birthday. A few months ago, my local café closed for the weekend because the usually effusive owner found the weather too cold. During a heat wave last month, a handful of other shops in the district closed down for the opposite reason.

Whenever I travel - to Paris, or London, or Athens, or even

to Milan - the first thing that amazes me is the sight of thousands and thousands of people marching off to work every morning. It's not something one notices around here. Work may get done, but only with the greatest reluctance.

How to explain it? Visitors down the centuries have observed the pleasures of the Italian *dolce far niente*, that state of dreamy indolence brought on by warm weather, good food, bewitching countryside, charming medieval towns and the unhurried good nature of the Italians themselves.

But the atmosphere in Rome is not quite like that; here, the lethargy is only pleasant up to

a point. Sometimes it feels downright menacing, as though the obstacle to productivity were some kind of weight bearing down on the city and that the only way to get anything done is to get the hell out of here. One can only speculate why this should be - the product of decades of corrupt central government bureaucracy, perhaps, or the lack of any economic or social purpose in Rome other than the parasitical acquisition and jealous guarding of power.

Rome certainly cannot claim to have been well-run in the past 50 years or so, and the result is a city of creeping provincialism where it takes a monumental effort to accomplish the most

mundane of tasks - whether it is braving the crazy traffic, fighting through overcrowded, poorly organised supermarkets, or standing in line at the post office to pay a telephone bill. Any one of these is enough to exhaust you for the rest of the day.

Yes, it is wonderful to stroll among baroque palaces, sit out in piazzas soaking up the early summer sun and feast on home cooking washed down with cool Frascati. But the city is remarkably unvaried in its pleasures, and if the Romans talk endlessly about fast cars, food and football, it is partly because there is nothing else to talk about.

If modern Rome has a marketable product, it must be

desperate, existential boredom," the travel writers Dana Facaros and Michael Pauls have observed. "The sort of numb vacuity that used to inspire French novelists and philosophers, and now only serves to nourish the gilded indolence of a city that has been with us too long."

On bad days, I am reminded of what the late comic actor Massimo Troisi, star of *The Postman* and a Neapolitan reluctantly transplanted to Rome, said when asked if he considered himself lazy. "Lazy is what I used to be," he insisted. "Nowadays I am heading towards total inertia."

Andrew Gumbel

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international

Balkan powder keg ready to explode

A series of attacks on Serb police targets in Kosovo last week has further increased the possibility of conflict in the predominantly Albanian-inhabited region of former Yugoslavia.

Since the beginning of the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo has been seen as the most dangerous Balkan powder keg. Any armed conflict could quickly escalate into international violence involving Albania and Macedonia, with its 40 per cent Albanian population. Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey would then risk being drawn into the conflict, with the resulting destabilisation of the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean.

The assaults, using automatic weapons and hand-grenades, left two policemen dead and several seriously wounded in the regions of Podujeva and Kosovo Mitrovica. They are presumed to be the work of Albanian separatists belonging to the Kosovo Liberation Army (Ushtria Clirimtare e Kosoves, UCK), an underground organisation which, in a letter to the BBC, admitted responsibility for the killings last month of six Serbs, three of them policemen, in the Decan region of southern Kosovo, and a series of grenade attacks on Serb refugee targets in mid-February.

The Podujeva region has now been sealed off by a massive police presence and several Albanians have been taken to police stations where they have reportedly been beaten up. Serbs view the attacks as a desperate attempt by Albanian extremists to focus international attention on Kosovo.

Following the rise to power of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic in 1989, Kosovo's autonomous status was revoked and the region was reintegrated into Serbia and subject to government from Belgrade. Since then, Serbian control has been reinforced by a 40,000 standing army in Kosovo backed up by 30,000 paramilitaries and police.

In response, the Albanians, who comprise 90 per cent of the population, formed the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) which set up a "shadow government" led by "President" Ibrahim Rugova. Since then, despite severe human rights abuses, the LDK has advocated a policy of peaceful resistance, calling for restraint from all Kosovo's citizens.

Such pleas are, however,

Ethnic tension has reached boiling point in Kosovo, writes **Miranda Vickers**

falling on increasingly deaf ears. The apartheid system that now operates in Kosovo keeps Serbs and Albanians apart, effectively reinforcing fear and suspicion of each community's aspirations and exacerbating the already deep divisions.

Mr Rugova, now a tired and withdrawn man, is fast losing credibility amongst his increasingly frustrated followers. Realising that their passive stance has been ignored by the international community, many Albanians are now demanding more aggressive action to achieve their goal of an independent Kosovo.

In a session last week of the Yugoslav lower house, interior minister Vukasin Jokanovic said that: "the Albanian separatist movement in Kosovo was striving to maintain a tense atmosphere and even create new tensions. A stabilisation is not in the interest of the separatist movement, particularly given the unequivocal stand of the international community that Kosovo is Serbia's internal affair." But patience on all sides is wearing thin. At a news conference, an angry spokesman for the Democratic Party of Serbia (DPS) accused the authorities of pursuing an "ostrich-like policy" in Kosovo.

The deteriorating situation has seriously alarmed international observers, prompting the Americans to hastily open a US Information Centre in Pristina, Kosovo's capital. Speaking at the opening ceremony, John Kornblum, US mediator for former Yugoslavia, said the centre was another "proof of permanent US interest and concern for the people of the region." The State Department also strongly reconfirmed its stance that the Belgrade government has to show substantial progress before the "outer wall" of sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia can be lifted.

Tensions were further heightened in a speech last week by the president of the Serbian Academy of Science (SANU),



Bitter tears: The funeral near Sarajevo yesterday of 47 Muslims killed by Serbs in 1992 and buried in mass graves Photograph: Peter Andrews

Alexander Despic, who called the Kosovo issue "the most important strategic problem of the Serbian people's future". He shocked listeners by indicating that, due to the overwhelming demographic superiority of the Albanians in Kosovo, the time had come for a possible "peaceful and civilised" secession of the region.

The Yugoslav League of Communists immediately criticised Despic's "reckless" stance calling it "irresponsible" and dangerous for inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo. The LDK, however, welcomed Despic's proposal. LDK deputy chairman, Fehmi Agani, told the independent Serbian newspaper Nasa Borba that "this statement is interpreted by the Albanians as proof that the original Ser-

bian nationalist aggression has been defeated".

The SANU speech seriously alarmed Kosovo's increasingly wary Serb and Montenegrin population, who feel Belgrade is about to sell them out. Several thousand gathered in Gracanica monastery last Saturday for a meeting organised by the newly-formed Serbian Resistance Movement (SAM), who demanded that an internal consensus be reached, and the national interest be clearly defined before any solution to the problem of Kosovo was proposed.

Although President Milosevic declined an invitation to present his views on Kosovo, the meeting began with a pre-prepared address to the state leader, read by writer Aco Rakocovic: "The Serbs of Kosovo refuse to be cattle peacefully led to the slaughter without knowing what awaits them."

In the absence of any initiative from Belgrade, the situation on the ground is becoming increasingly dangerous. The time for agreement between Serbs and Albanians is fast running out. The recent recognition of Yugoslavia by several EU countries and the failure of the Dayton Accord to address the Kosovo issue has left Albanians angry and disillusioned.

They feel they are now being forced to abandon their passive stance. At the same time Kosovo's Slavs, determined not to suffer the same fate of Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia, are mobilising themselves in their drive to keep Kosovo within the borders of Yugoslavia.



Milosevic: led effort to integrate Kosovo into Serbia

Why we must not forget a shameful massacre

Srebrenica has not been forgotten. The dark hills around the small Balkan town, where between three and eight thousand people were killed by Bosnian Serb troops a year ago this week, are being painstakingly excavated by war crimes investigators.

Evidence is being accumulated at The Hague as the war crimes tribunal puts together its cases against the Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic, and his military commander, General Ratko Mladic. There will also be memorial services across Europe to commemorate the bloodshed which took place a year ago.

The Hague tribunal has been hearing the evidence of witnesses of atrocities allegedly carried out for Karadzic and Mladic. Today, it is possible that the tribunal will issue international warrants for them.

The name of Srebrenica is and should be, imprinted on the European consciousness, because the killings were, as one of the tribunal indictments put it, "the most horrendous, unimaginable war crimes committed in Europe since the end of World War II". Srebrenica's Muslim population "was virtually eliminated" overnight.

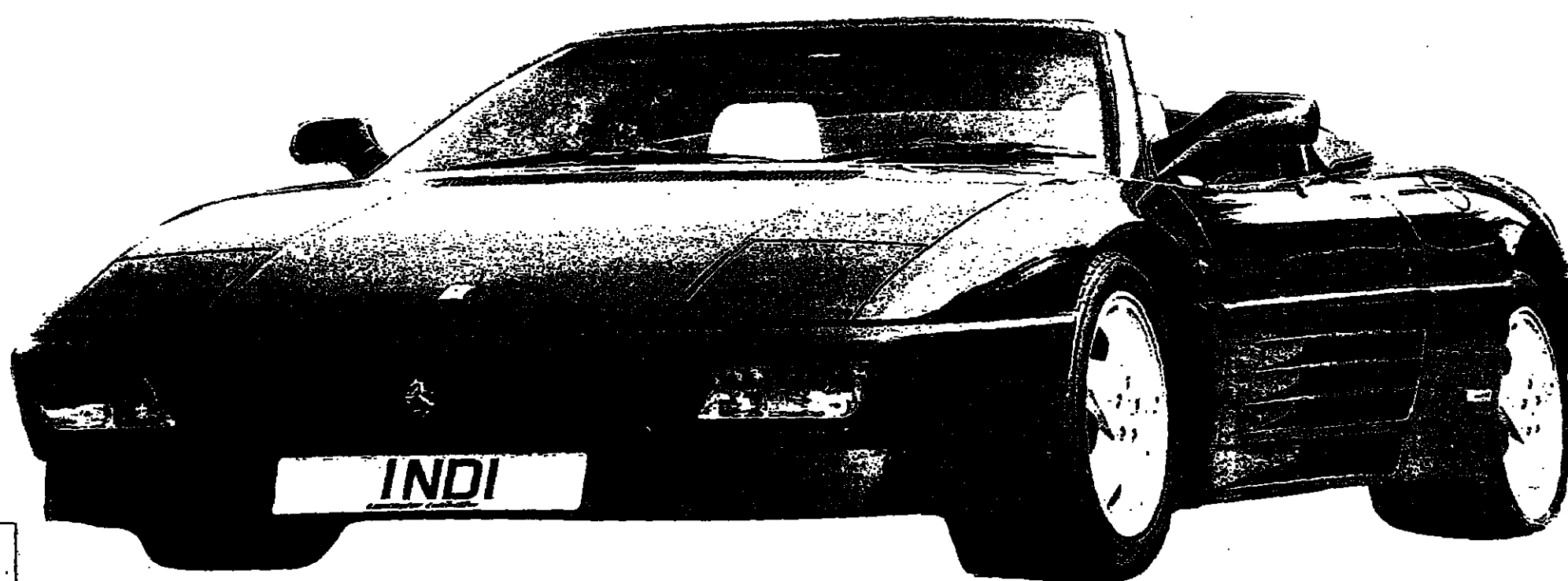
But what makes this worse is that this was an avoidable catastrophe. The Dutch United Nations troops were outgunned, and the mission that they were supposed to be carrying out - protecting the people of Srebrenica - soon proved impossible. The UN and Nato, despite all the firepower and authority that they should have been able to muster, were apparently unable to do anything to stop the terrible carnage.

Many Muslims around the world cannot help but wonder if the reason why the massacre at Srebrenica happened, and was not stopped, was because its inhabitants were Muslims. It is hard to disagree.

Justice must now be done. So the diggers must keep digging, the lawyers must keep working, and none of us should forget what happened in those dark forests a year ago.

ANDREW MARSHALL

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THE INDEPENDENT
TOKEN 3
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Enjoy the Mandela legend – cynicism can wait

Cynical, irreverent Britain is twitching with excitement for the imminent arrival of the inspirational South African president, Nelson Mandela this week. President Mandela is the stuff of romantic legend, as well as the greatest statesman alive. We want to gape in breathless awe at him, to grin, to cry and to give him a huge hug all at the same time.

Mandela's endurance as an international hero has been remarkable. True, in this sceptical age we are yearning for inspiration and leadership to reverse. But we are quick to destroy it once created, too. With the media and public keen to sneer and deride, and intractable political problems, it is not surprising national leaders are knocked swiftly from their pedestals.

The scope for scuppering the reputation of the South African president was immense. How could any man be expected to live up to the myths and the mystique built around his leadership during his years in prison?

We might have expected to watch Nelson Mandela's reputation crumble under the experience of power. Quite the reverse. If anything, the authority and legitimacy of his leadership have been enhanced by his six years of freedom. So in a world that pines for leadership, it is worth considering what makes a leader great. British political life is dominated by grown men and women bickering and belittling each other. The

sight of Messrs Major, Blair and Ashdown hurling accusations at each other every week is hardly edifying.

In Nelson Mandela instead we find the power of the calm, quiet leader. When Mandela speaks, we listen. Not because he shouts or has tantrums, nor because he can hurt us, but because we respect him. The power that comes from personality alone, learnt during the apparently powerless position of prison when no other resources are available, is far more persistent than the transient power of those who occupy important positions.

His power is enhanced, too, by his moral authority and integrity. There is nothing like generosity in suffering to capture forever the moral high ground. Nelson Mandela's ability and determination to forgive despite his 27 years in prison for his cause have earned him unrivalled respect and admiration both at home and abroad.

Yet we should never forget quite what an astute politician Nelson Mandela is too. All the moral authority in the world is no use without a little political acumen in the running of a government. Mandela has made a deliberate and largely successful effort to become the president of the entire South Africa, not just of the black majority. He has managed to personify the values of a very disparate nation.

This is the real test of a modern national leader. The strength and pop-

ularity of the Irish president, Mary Robinson, flow from her ability to represent the mixed values of modern Ireland. Yitzhak Rabin did the same in Israel, before his assassination. The great leaders are those who manage personally to encapsulate the spirit of the nation, and then to lead it – as both Rabin and Mandela have done – towards a difficult but better future.

So Mandela has worked hard to reach out to every individual and every community in his nation. From his suffering and imprisonment he draws the authority to lead the ANC and the black majority that supports it. From

his generosity and his openness he draws the respect of the white and Afrikaans communities too.

It is hardly surprising that Mandela manages to appeal to white South Africa, and to the British. In many ways he is the perfect British colonial leader. Imprisoned in 1963, he retains in his manner the formal politeness of the Fifties English law student. He is everything Rudyard Kipling's "If" poem ever said a man should be. He keeps his head when all about him are losing theirs; he trusts himself yet makes allowances for other's doubts; he waits and isn't tired by waiting, being hated

does not give in to hating; he walks with kings yet keeps the common touch."

And it is this last, this common touch, which reassures us that he is after all a modern democratic leader, rather than a Fifties patriarch. Mandela is the president who holds up banquets while he chats with kitchen staff, talks to the drivers as well as the dignitaries that sit in their cars, and plans to walk round Brixton, not just Buckingham Palace gardens. He retains the touch of humility wrapped up with the sadness of a fragile, lonely, elderly man. He is the grandfather we want to embrace.

Other Western leaders pale in comparison. Clinton is good at the glad-handing, but he has little moral authority or dignity. The Queen may be dignified, but she has no common touch. Major and Blair may try hard, but we suspect their integrity, and we observe their triumphalism and their anger on a weekly basis.

Of course if Nelson Mandela were our own we would find ways to attack him and pull him apart just as we do with Major, Blair and the monarchy. His authoritarian style may indeed be hindering the development of proper democratic party government in South Africa. Crime is soaring, unemployment is uncomfortably high, and many blacks are unhappy with the slowness of change.

Were Nelson Mandela our president, it would be our duty to scrutinise him,

to criticise his failings, and to remind the public that he is as human as the rest of us. While he remains the leader of a foreign power, visiting for just a few days, we can enjoy the legend. We should take the chance to do more. In Trafalgar Square, opposite South Africa House, where the apartheid protesters kept vigil for so many years, lies an empty plinth. Here would be the perfect place to erect our own tribute to such a remarkable man and the struggles of his nation.

A volley of buttocks

It was a controversial claim, we admit. To criticise the extra entertainment at Wimbledon this year as "buttock-clenchingly naïf". Many *Independent* readers wrote in to complain at our cynicism and whingeing about Cliff Richard's impromptu singing in the rain last week. They made a strong point.

But we believe the events of yesterday came to our defence. After a miserable, drizzly Wimbledon, one spectator chose to follow Sir Cliff's example with a little extra "light entertainment." What happened? A woman stripped, ran across Centre Court and clenched her buttocks for all to see.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Labour hits back at 'green' Gummer

Sir: In the House of Commons it is out of order to call someone a liar, even when they are not telling the truth. I had to withdraw when I called John Gummer a liar at environmental questions on Tuesday. I hope the same rules don't apply in your letters column, where he certainly wasn't telling the truth (5 July) about Labour's new document *New Labour, New Life for Britain*.

The document covers both national and international policy commitments on the environment. Friends of the Earth welcome "green pledges in Labour's new policy overview". The Environment Industries Commission called it a "very significant development" because "Labour recognises that Britain has a chance to win a lion's share of the new world markets for environmental technology". The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds welcomed our "commitment to reforming the Common Agricultural Policy" – reforms which Mr Gummer failed to achieve when he was Agriculture Minister.

All three organisations quite rightly want more detail on our environmental policies and how we will implement them. Much is already set out in our longer policy statements from which the new document was distilled. More will be made available in due course.

Above all our document makes clear that "The environment is not just a matter for one government department but for all departments of government and should inform its decision making."

FRANK DOBSON MP
(Holborn and St Pancras, Labour)
Shadow Environment Secretary
House of Commons
London SW1

Sir: What a cheek for John Gummer to claim a "strong environmental record" for the Tories. This from the representative of a government which is building the Newbury bypass, which has subsidised nuclear power for years and which has consistently failed to consider the environment in the development of policy – it having recently been revealed that, despite commitments to do so, no government department conducted an environmental appraisal of its policies in 1995.

It is true that Labour's document did not contain a major section on the environment. But then environment groups have spent years arguing that green issues could not be parcelled off on their own but should be integrated into other areas of policy. To its credit, Labour has begun to do this and the welcome commitment to making polluters pay, in the largest environment section, was joined by others elsewhere in the document. Environmental responsibility for departments, an Environmental Task Force for unemployed young people, support for green business and technology, more efficient environmental practices by government.

Certainly we could have expected more and it was perhaps surprising to see no mention of standards for clean air or of the programme for home energy efficiency which Labour has touted and which could reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create up to 50,000 jobs. We look forward to Labour giving these proposals the prominence they



deserve in the forthcoming election campaign.

JOHN WATSON
Socialist Environment and
Resources Association
London N4

Sir: We welcome Mr Gummer's anxiety over the effects of climate change on the UK. However, it is the response to climate change globally which is on the agenda at the UN negotiations in Geneva this week. The key question is: what will be the basis upon which all (not just industrial) countries will agree to work together on contracting the emissions which are putting us at risk?

The answer is convergence. This global approach from developing countries was spelled out clearly by the Indian government when they spoke at the UN climate change negotiations last year in Berlin: "Protecting the world's environment requires that development be sustainable. It also implies the implementation of a programme for convergence at equitable and sustainable par values for the use of environmental space on a per capita basis globally. In our view equal rights to carbon usage is fundamental to the convention."

It is difficult to avoid this logic when it comes from the very people whose agreement to a global programme of carbon contraction is the sine qua non of avoiding climate damage. GCI recognises this as the *realpolitik* of global climate change and we invite Mr Gummer and the Climate Action Network to do so as well.

AUBREY MEYER
Director, Global Commons Institute
London NW2

Sir: Climate change in the UK will almost certainly be exacerbated by the volumes of hot air emanating from John Gummer.

Once, you or I would have visited the local shops and purchased just the items we needed for a day or two. Now, many town centres are devastated, shops are boarded up, and most of us, if we're lucky enough to run a car, are now involved in going on mass weekly shopping trips necessitating a car journey in order to transport the large amounts of shopping we feel we have to buy in order to justify the trip.

MICHAEL MITCHELL
High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

Baffled by league tables

Sir: Your assertion that people understand and compensate for the complexities of league table data (leading article, 3 July) sat oddly alongside Polly Toynbee's condemnation of tabloid readers' inability to see behind the printed word.

Many of the tables are based on poor data and unvalidated groupings. These are being refined over time so the league rating of one year may quite differ from subsequent years. Can the average layman fully grasp this?

Much more damning is the fact that most people focus on those aspects of their work which are made public. Waiting lists may have fallen for elective, non-urgent cases but what has happened to cancer

cases who do not go on the list? Schools may do very well, but do they use the same criteria as others for excluding their more difficult pupils? Current league table policies encourage "creative" positive discrimination which effectively disadvantages the already vulnerable. Is middle-class clamour for data really worth that? DR JOHN D WILLIAMSON
Hove, East Sussex

Birth without painkillers

Sir: I was disturbed to read your comments about natural childbirth (5 July). Surely you cannot be suggesting that women who subscribe to the idea of childbirth without drugs are putting their lives at risk. Women have died in childbirth, and still do, from the effects of poverty, deprivation and ignorance, from anaemia and malnutrition, obstructed labour, hypertensive and thromboembolic disease and haemorrhage. These are all abnormal conditions, not natural causes. The reduction in maternal mortality, at least in the Western world, is due to better general health and education, access to maternity services, and our improved ability to detect and treat those abnormal situations.

We may be "better" at pain relief these days, but this carries a price. Narcotics can have a depressive effect on newborn respiration, epidurals are associated with an increased risk of instrumental delivery, which has implications for

the health of mother and baby. For a woman to want and aim for a drug-free labour is a perfectly reasonable and safe option. Such women about to embark on a birth do not need editorials like this implying that they may be putting their lives at risk. What all childbearing women do need is clear unbiased information about the advantages and disadvantages of any intervention in the birth process, along with support and encouragement to make decisions for themselves without being made to feel guilty, whichever kind of birth they choose. JANET ABRAHAMS
Sheffield

Morality in the market place

Sir: If we're going to have a national debate on moral values ("Archbishop strides into moral maze", 6 July), I hope it will be a proper one. I hope we aren't going to spend all our time telling parents and teachers what to teach children.

Let's talk about moral values in business too – about the moral obligations of shareholders to the board of directors; of directors to employees and to the local community. Is making a profit the principal aim of a business? Or is profit a necessary condition of its existence; so that it can provide employment, goods and services to the community?

Let's talk about moral foundations of the welfare state. Is

it to be a refuge in an uncertain world for those who can't afford to build their own personal welfare castles? Or should it be inclusive, something to which all contribute and from which all benefit?

It's good that a church leader has started the debate. But let's not fall into the trap of thinking that the principal task of the church is to lay down moral rules for everyone to follow. The church needs first to tell the story, a hopeful story – about how we are all at sea with the wreckage of the failed stories of socialism and free-market capitalism, but also about how we can make a fresh start, create a better community together, and live life to the full even in an insecure world. PAUL JOHNS
Nottingham

Losing our looted marbles

Sir: A modest correction to Rebecca Fowler's piece ("When stones and marbles are fought over", 4 July): Lord Elgin did not actually buy the Parthenon Marbles from a Turkish overlord. This is a common misconception which lends a kind of spurious legality to the operation. It is ironic in the context of the Stone of Scone affair that the marbles, so important to the Greeks, were removed from occupied Greece by a Scot. Let us right two wrongs while we're about it.

GRAHAM BINNS
The British Committee for
the Restitution of the
Parthenon Marbles
London N1

Why men fail – and succeed

Sir: Yvette Cooper's witty article about the state of men (5 July) didn't mention one important aspect of "men achieving badly". Commentators never cease to wonder about the apparent contradiction between the increasing success of women in the job market and the continuing predominance of men in senior positions. Various explanations have been given: "the glass ceiling", "the old boy network", the "unclubbability" of women. Like many clichés they reflect the truth.

The division between the successes and failures in the job market is far starker between male peers than it is between females. The "winner-take-all" society we now live in is only a realisation of attitudes Western males have been reared to accept for decades.

While women students tend to graduate with upper seconds, their male contemporaries are more likely to collect firsts and thirds. If you observe students throughout the education system you will notice that, while girls tend to underestimate their abilities, but work steadily anyway, those boys who are pessimistic about their chances decide they would rather be seen to lose effortlessly than not "win" despite having tried.

DAMIAN COUNSELL
Imperial College, London

Saddam plans to hoodwink UN

Sir: Saddam Hussein has a passion for vengeance – just ask his sons-in-law. Your report "Defector exposes Saddam's lies" (5 July) gives further evidence that Saddam is interested only in vengeance and not in distributing food and medical supplies to the Iraqi people, despite agreeing to the UN's "oil-for-food" resolution.

He has submitted a food distribution plan to the UN that calls for the import of advanced dual-use technology that will be used to build up his military capacity. For example, he has requested sophisticated computers allegedly to be used for education. But in the past, computers imported by Iraqi educational institutions have been used in weapons research. The regime has also requested spare parts for helicopters which they claim will be used for agricultural spraying. However, these same helicopters can be used for chemical and biological attacks against the Iraqi people and against neighbouring countries.

When the "oil-for-food" resolution is implemented, Saddam will attempt to divert the \$400m currently used for the Iraqi rationing system to build up his military capacity. The UN must increase its vigilance.

AHMAD CHALABI
President of the Executive Council
Iraqi National Congress
London

Military feet

Sir: Training shoes (letter, 5 July) are comfortable but are ill-suited to carrying heavy loads, standing on deep mud, or climbing over obstacles, all inseparable from military activities. Feet which have not been toughened in leather shoes and boots go to the nub when they are used in the field. The Army quite sensibly has taken note of this. Sloth has nothing to do with it.

DR A K MIDDLELEY
Letch (44th MI)
Leamington

Meet Heather, Britain's town hall terminator

Chris Blackhurst speaks to the woman who has said hasta la vista to fraudsters in a very rotten borough

This country struggles with Heather Rabbatts. Where there is corruption we like it to remain hidden, swept away under the carpet. We do not like people who speak home truths, who embarrass us, make us feel uncomfortable, tell us there is a cancer in our midst.

Other countries, Italy and the US especially, have always had their crusading mayors, attorneys and magistrates. Here, we have never had a Rudolph Giuliani, the attorney who became mayor of New York with a promise to stamp out City Hall crime. Not until now.

Step forward Ms Rabbatts. Aged 40, half-Jamaican, married but separated with a 12-year-old son, she is our Giuliani. Lambeth, where she is chief executive of the local council, is our Brooklyn.

Typically, when it occurs in Britain, fraud is a one-off, an individual with their fingers in the till, who got greedy and was caught. Rarely are there instances of systemic, all-pervading crookery. One case which is an exception – possibly the worst there has been, worse even than Liverpool in the early Eighties or Tyneside in the Seventies – is Lambeth.

Last July, Elizabeth Appleby QC, in a report commissioned by the council, described the south London borough as "an appalling mess. The financial control of Lambeth is such that vast amounts of money are wasted and in consequence services are severely prejudiced."

The policies of previous regimes, concluded the QC, had created "the perfect atmosphere for abuse of the system by persons working within Lambeth and outside". Council taxes were not collected, town hall employees were on the fiddle, subcontractors were ripping off the borough. A council that presided over one of the poorest areas of London, with its legacy of black youth unemployment, run-down

estates, non-performing schools and escalating levels of crime, was owed more than £200m in rents and local tax arrears.

Successive left-wing Labour councils, under "Red" Ted Knight, Linda Bellos and Joan Twelves had blamed the crisis on lack of central government cash. Appleby, although she did not name names, said differently: "The failure to deliver proper services is nothing to do with under-funding, it is due to Lambeth's mismanagement of its funds."

Into this maelstrom stepped Ms Rabbatts. She was appointed shortly before the Appleby report was published. The advertisement for her post had left little to chance: "Arguably The Worst Job in Local Government!" it screamed and listed the reasons "why you might not want this job". It was an impressively candid list: non-existent morale, poor services, one of the worst reputations of any council in Britain, appalling public image.

Her friends, even her mother, said she did not need this. She was earning £80,000 a year as chief executive of neighbouring Merton council, a suburban, leafy doddle by contrast to the inner-city hell next-door. For cleaning up Lambeth, for overturning years of moral

charges: another 60 workers disciplined.

Ms Rabbatts is proving a tough manager. More than £40m has been saved, some of it by her clean-up campaign, the rest by taking decisions that, in Lambeth Town Hall, would once have been unthinkable. She has slashed the workforce by 1,200 to 9,000 and cut the council tax – by £5, "but it is still a reduction".

In case anyone should think her first year has been all about a crackdown, she points to one of her first moves: appointing two people to repair all the broken lights on the council estates. They have managed 6,500, with 500 still to go. "There were some estates where the lights had been on all day for two years and off all night for two years," she says, "so I organised a 'Bulb Blitz'."

Don't write this off as a soundbite. "I know it sounds minor, but for people living on the estates just seeing it happening was brilliant. It made them believe that Lambeth is working. The overwhelming emotion I encountered was that people had given up."

Her contempt for her predecessors who gaily allowed one building contract to soar in price from £244,000 to £1,367,000, whose workmen charged £71,000 to replace two

we work here but the organisation has ceased to exist.

Her method of restoring that faith was to get her own way, with everything. Before she accepted the job, to the fury of some Labour die-hards who remembered the old days, she insisted on carte blanche to appoint her own people and dispense with those she did not want.

For someone who was a lawyer representing many of the Greenham Common women before going into local government, such undemocratic demands went against her CV, but, after protracted soul-searching by the council, she got her way. It helped that the council, since 1994, has had no overall majority, with power shared more or less equally between the three main parties. One unifying factor is Ms Rabbatts, their chief executive.

She is resistant to the accusation that her actions smack of another, more famous iron lady and that she has sold out in the pursuit of power. "No, I'm not a Thatcherite," she says, visibly bristling. Whatever she has done, she maintains, has been done with one thing in mind, to improve the lot of the people of Lambeth. If it hurts – and 1,200 staff cuts must have caused a lot of pain – so be it. "I did not come here to be Miss Popular."

Armed with her mandate to change, she set about hiring like-minded people. Existing staff were put through a series of competence tests. If they failed, they were out. If they passed with flying colours, fine. If they were on the margin, they were told to get their acts together.

Her top signing was Heather Du Quesnay, director of education in Hertfordshire, to sort out the borough's schools. Ms Du Quesnay, Chair of the Society of Chief Education Officers, was a major catch, and an appointment that went against Lambeth's recent experience.

The council is one of two London authorities selected for special inspection by Ofsted for their abysmal records. "We do have poor schools and we will sort them out," says Ms Rabbatts. "There was no real management team, people would not come and work here." Ms Du Quesnay's arrival on a salary of over £74,000, making her one of the highest-paid council education bosses in the country, sent out a clear signal.

Another was the creation of a 16-strong Corporate Anti-Fraud Team or CAFT, mainly drawn from people from outside the borough, to lead the fight against fraud, particularly in housing benefit which accounts for £25m to £30m a year. Despite all Lambeth's prob-

lems, it is this battle she mentions time and again. "There were values and ethics here that said it was acceptable to commit fraud and cheat the system," she says. "The issue about fraud is that people were claiming monies which would otherwise be used for people who are poor – it is not appropriate for a local authority to turn a blind eye."

A week ago she gave evidence to the Commons Social Security Select Committee's inquiry into housing benefit fraud and had the MPs eating out of her hand. The Tories present failed to score many political points and found themselves in the unique position of congratulating the chief officer of Lambeth council.

Now, having moved on from in-house corruption and individual claimants' fiddling, she is targeting the organised gangs who see housing benefit as easy money. In the past few months since her team began its drive, 4,000 private landlords have suddenly and mysteriously ceased to claim benefit. Members of her staff have been threatened. So far, none has been made to her, explicitly, although "one is careful".

She is busy recruiting more staff to go out on to the streets to inspect individual properties and root out the fraudulent claimants. Previously, the council benefits computer did not track cheques and there was no way of checking if staff were themselves claiming. All that has changed – her revamped computer found 50-odd claimants at one house alone – and staff have been caught.

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For Ms Rabbatts, any review is likely to be a small hurdle on a relentless path. "Lambeth is like Everest and we are just in the foothills," she says. Once that summit is reached, there will, undoubtedly, be a new challenge. Head of the National Audit Office or the Audit Commission perhaps? Somehow, you sense that if she was looking into a scandal like the spiralling cost of the British Library, those responsible would have been named by now and be drummed out.

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Photograph: Philip Meech

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ENTRY FORM

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Address _____
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TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Send completed entry form, photographs and a cheque or postal order payable to Heart of Britain to HEART OF BRITAIN, DEPT. 100, VICTORIA ROAD, LONDON, W14 9JF. 2. Only black & white or colour prints (max. size 6" x 4") will be accepted. 3. Your name & address, the title of the photograph and preferred book chapter should be attached to the back of each photograph. 4. All photographs submitted are accepted on the basis of copyright. 5. Copyright in all photographs submitted is assigned to Royal Brompton Hospital NHS Trust. Photographs can not be returned. 6. Closing date for applications is 21 July 1996. 7. Judges' decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into. 8. 1st prize photograph is selected for inclusion in the book you will be contacted by 31 August 1996. 9. Receipt of postage is not receipt of delivery. 10. Damaged, defaced or illegible entries will be discarded. 11. 10 life reserve the right to alter photographs and their titles. 11. All 1st prize photographs will be displayed within 28 days.

SO GET OUT THERE AND SNAP THE WINNER!

Aah! Those happy days of readers' letters

I am sometimes asked if there are any specific topics that prompt readers to write to a columnist. What do people get het up over? Is it politics? Television? Sport? Political correctness? Well, in my experience it is none of these. People sometimes write in if they think their religious beliefs have been offended, but they are far more likely to write in to correct my spelling or grammar. Pedantry never dies. I know the feeling, because I am a pedant myself and tend to get hot under the collar if I see "Mr Jones' car" or "if people say 'disinterested' when they really mean 'uninterested'". But I am trying to arrest this process and I sometimes go so far as to lightly include a split infinitive in a column to gauge how many protests I will get. Not many. These days, especially since the last Reith lecturer once and for all nailed the so-called sin of the split infinitive as something invented by 18th-century

grammarians by false analogy with Latin.

However, pedantry is an arid subject compared to nostalgia, a healthy (or unhealthy) source of readers' letters. I recently mourned the passing of Willis Conover, the man on the Voice of America Jazz Hour whose voice for many years was synonymous with their jazz education in the 1950s and 1960s, and there was a shower of letters from readers wanting to share their memories. A Norwegian reader now living in France remembered growing up in Oslo and getting the programme via Tanger in Morocco. Mr Joe Joseph of Bury remembers being in Singapore in the 1950s and getting the programme via Tokyo, though with some difficulty...

In those days Singapore was still suffering from irregular power blackouts and on many occasions I missed the broadcast. Remember, this was before the days of the transist. I built myself a battery-operated, one-valve SW receiver



Miles Kingston

from a circuit in Practical Wireless just to receive that frequency. During the evening before the broadcast, I connected the HT and the LT batteries to the receiver, slung a length of bell wire out of the window to serve as an aerial, donned my army surplus headphones and started to tune in. "I don't know if you are aware of the problems in tuning a very crude receiver. Even the act of breathing was sufficient to detune the frequency and I could only hope that nobody would come into my room to upset my delicate aerial. Happy days..."

I always enjoy stories like that, possibly because I haven't the faintest idea what they are talking about, at least not the technical detail.

The youngest of the readers who remembered Willis Conover was Gerry Markey, a songwriter of Liverpool, who obligingly even sent me a song he had written of his memories of Conover in the 1960s. "Living as we did close to Burtonwood US Army base, I used to listen avidly to the AFN... I wrote this song to remind myself and every time I sing it I am back there with the washing hanging down over my head, the gas fire on and the kettle permanently boiling for cups of tea. The schoolbooks were incidental. They were the chore. The rest is priceless. Oddly enough, what I didn't realise then was that those were the days when at least I had the resources of concentration to write an essay, listen to my favourite music AND listen out for the light but severe tread of my mother,

who was a gifted musician but never keen on my dedication to the cause of memorising every song, singer and place in the Hit Parade of every soul song played on the VOA between 1967 and 1970."

Vintage nostalgia. I can say I was ever struck on 1960s soul music, but I do remember Burtonwood base, which we used to pass en route to Liverpool in the 1950s, when Mum went on shopping expeditions there, and I can remember seeing behind the camp fence this extraordinarily shaped field which turned out to be a baseball pitch...

Stop! I am drifting into nostalgia myself. Let me end by saying that I have found in the past week or so that the best way to get readers writing to me is via neither pedantry nor even nostalgia. The best way to get reader reaction is to suggest that "Give him the money, Barney" was a catch phrase used by Arthur Askey. More of this thrilling topic tomorrow.

JP 11/10/150

Sentenced to hard labour

Despite advances, women's experience of childbirth is still being dehumanised by medical practice, says Sheila Kitzinger

A psychologist, Marianne Morris, interviews 16 women about childbirth and concludes that women can be classified in three types: Romantic Princess, Romantic Hero and Functional (The Independent, July 5). Why are women always being labelled like this?

Romantics of both kinds are, she claims, at risk of being traumatised by "the most painful experience in a woman's life-time". They look at birth through rose-tinted spectacles or are determined to put on a heroic display, exhibiting a masochism that takes pleasure in excruciating pain. Functionals are level-headed and reasonable. In the paper she presented to the British Psychological Society she quoted Functionals: "As soon as it gets painful they can take over" and "It will only ever be what I want if I'm knocked out cold before anything happens."

There is, in fact, nothing particularly rational about such attitudes and women who plan a completely pain-free birth are often deeply shocked by the reality. The experience of birth is far more complex than this exclusive focus on pain. It depends a vast amount on the quality of the environment in which birth takes place.

That has nothing to do with whether there is a patchwork spread and a rocking chair or a TV set and everything to do with the relationship with those who give care. Many normal labours are made complicated, and apparently easy births made painful and frightening, because a woman's wishes and values are ignored or trivialised and her body is treated like a clapped-out machine that needs constant surveillance and advanced engineering to get it started and keep it running.

To pronounce on women's birth experiences as if they were the consequence of our own deranged psyches is to twist and falsify what women are saying about childbirth. Women are not responsible for bringing on themselves distressing experiences because of unrealistic expectations. Responsibility lies with hospitals in which the requirements of the institution take precedence over the needs of women and where the system of care is hierarchical, rigid and insensitive.

In many hospitals women have labour induced automatically if they go past their due date by 10 days or two weeks. They are harpooned to an electronic foetal monitor in spite of the evidence that electronic monitoring does not save babies' lives or produce them in better condition and that it often leads to emergency Caesarean section for no good reason. Women are subjected to the protocols of Active Management, which impose a time-table that does not permit any labour to continue beyond 12 hours, whatever a woman's wishes.

The whole procedure is clock-watched and the uterus stimulated artificially to force it to conform to the rules. Think of being required to empty your bowels, digest your food, or make love, while an expert stands over you critically observing your per-

formance and with an anxious eye on the clock. Finally the woman's genitals are incised with an episiotomy to get the baby out more quickly.

All three "types" of women whose interviews were printed in the Independent, were distressed by their loss of control. It didn't matter how they were labelled. There is plenty of good research which shows that when women are disempowered in childbirth the experience is traumatic and is often remembered as a kind of rape, with long-term effects on personality and close relationships.

As a social anthropologist of birth, researcher into women's experiences and counsellor with the Birth Crisis Network, I have listened to thousands of women's birth accounts. While most women of all social classes, levels of education and cultural backgrounds are concerned about pain, it is not that they seek a promise of instant anaesthesia. Rather they want ways of handling pain that enable them to remain in control. They require accurate information, choices between alternatives, and to be able to make their own decisions. That may include the decision to hand over to the professionals. Vital is a continuing relationship with a skilled and understanding helper, giving unwavering emotional support.

Through the centuries and all over the world, women have formed a strong network of support for birthing women. Despite a popular Western myth that "primitive" women give birth completely alone, that is rarely the case. The traditional midwife is one of a group of women, family and neighbours, who give practical help and who also often enact powerful rites of birth which have deep religious and spiritual significance. The midwife choreographs a drama that reinforces female friendship and interdependence in the community.

In medieval times, a woman called on her God-Sibs, literally "sisters in God", to support her. The many Siennese paintings of the Virgin Mary giving birth depict domestic scenes of women tending mother and baby. Till well into the 20th century this was the typical birth setting throughout Europe. Birth was an affirmation of women's friendship and understanding of each other's needs. Men were turned out of the house and women took over. The word God-Sib gradually changed in male language to "gossip".

In North American pioneer settlements there was a dearth of women to assist at birth, with women often travelling great distances to be with each other. The norm became: "I'll come and sew a quilt, make baby clothes, prepare the birthing room, look after you at the time of birth, cook meals and take over the work in the orchard and dairy in the weeks after, and you'll come to me when I have my baby."

This was social childbirth. It is worlds away from the medieval model. Though we should welcome obstetric intervention when it is used appropriately and with discrimination, we should also recognise that we have lost



Women simply want to be treated with respect during childbirth, not as princesses or heroes

something precious. No woman should have to give birth under the gaze of perfect strangers, feel that she is a product on a conveyor belt, or have her body handled like a carcass in an abattoir.

leads to fewer birth interventions, and is no more expensive than the standard model.

A research report, *The Evaluation of One to One Midwifery Practice*, by

I have listened to thousands of women's birth accounts. They don't seek instant anaesthesia. They want ways of staying in control

We can start to reclaim the social model of birth when there is one-to-one midwifery care - when a midwife becomes a friend during a woman's pregnancy and cares for her during birth and post-partum. It is not an impossible dream. In an area of London covered by the Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's hospitals a one-to-one system of midwifery care for 800 women every year has proved safe and is much preferred by women. It

Dr Christine McCourt and Professor Lesley Page will be published by the Centre for Midwifery Practice at Thames Valley University in September. It reveals that with a midwife whom they already know and who is not flitting from one task to another with different women, women in labour need fewer pain-relieving drugs, and that the drugs work better if they are required. The epidural rate is much reduced, women are less

likely to be tethered to a monitor, less at risk of episiotomy and more likely to have an intact perineum. They feel more positive about the birth, their own preparedness and how well they managed. Most women who had personal midwife care found birth "hard work but wonderful".

To give birth is an intimate, sexual and intensely personal act. A good midwife understands this. She provides more than technical expertise, careful observation and manipulative dexterity when it is needed. She gives herself. She is a strong anchor in the stormy sea of labour. She is a skilled companion who can be relied on utterly because she understands what you seek, and is committed to you. The humanisation of birth depends on developing one-to-one midwifery care.

The writer's *Pregnancy and Childbirth* has sold more than 1 million copies. Andreas Whitlam Smith returns next week from holiday.

How to snap the snappers

An insider's guide to beating the paparazzi. By Glenda Cooper

From time to time, polls reveal the most unpopular and untrustworthy professions. Usually MPs, journalists and estate agents fight it out at the top. But one species is more hated than all the rest. Spurned by the man in the street, reviled by celebrities, we have the hapless newspaper photographer.

This weekend, two more fell victim to angry public personalities. When Martin Stenning followed the Princess of Wales on his motorbike, her solution was simple and effective. She jumped out of her car, pinched his ignition keys and drove off laughing. A classy act for a media manipulator.

James Aylott had a less pleasant experience. Disturbing Paul Gascoigne on his honey-moon in Hawaii, Aylott found himself in hospital after someone struck with a stone. An effective technique, but involving less finesse than the Princess showed.

A photographer's lot is not a happy one even within the newspapers they work for. Usually nicknamed "snappers", the alternative, crueler term is "monkeys" - because of photographers' tendency to jump up and down, run backwards and climb trees. But for any celeb who has borne the indignity of seeing the inside of their nostrils all over the front page or their cellulite revealed getting out of a limo, there is no love lost.

In the old days, of course, the simple way to avoid appearing in the papers in an unflattering light was to cover your features with a newspaper or umbrella. Sadly, this no longer works unless you want to affix an umbrella permanently to your forehead. Even then, editors have discovered that photos of people trying to hide are funnier than those of them walking normally, and so are much more likely to be used.

No, in today's world, avoiding photos is a more sophisticated process, requiring careful planning and superb execution. So here we can exclusively reveal the insider's guide to beating the paparazzi.

First, perfect the art of blinking slowly and regularly. Nothing annoys a snapper more than a picture ruined by someone's eyes closed (unless, of course, the story is that you have a drink problem, in which case rumours may be fuelled).

If this is too difficult, it is time to hire burly minders, each armed with sharp scissors to snip the camera strap at the crucial moment. Minders can also distract snappers with comments such as: "Look, mate, Madonna isn't here and she

told me she's not coming downstairs today," while you slip out the back door.

The truly professional solution is to hire lots of security guards to hustle your lookalike (preferably under a shawl) out of the hotel front door amid shouts of "ou offmiway!" Two hundred photographers will immediately pursue said lookalike around Kensington for hours, leaving you free to browse happily in Soho.

The other alternative is to offer one photographer a place on your private plane without specifying a name. Let the monkeys fight it out among themselves - it's prudent to call the ambulance in advance - and taxi down the runway leaving the yells of pain behind.

Perhaps the most effective technique, though, is treating photographers like human beings. Used to hurtled insults, stoney silence and physical abuse, a photographer who is treated in a civilised manner will be pathetically grateful. At the height of the Sara Keays scandal, Cecil Parkinson invited snappers soaked in the rain to shelter in his garage. Later, he

A photographer treated civilly will be pathetically grateful

brought out a bottle of whisky to warm them up. When one raised his camera, the offender was quickly and effectively squashed by the rest.

Here a tribute must be paid again to the Princess of Wales, probably the most photographed woman in the world. She has pioneered many innovative techniques. In the early days she caught a bus to avoid a photographer (a truly remarkable achievement for a woman who admits she doesn't know how to use a public phone box). Now she employs the more subtle tactic of crying in the middle of the road so that most feel too sorry to take advantage of her.

And finally, remember that photographers are like you and me. They crave excitement, glamour and huge expense accounts. In Hawaii, James Aylott overheard Gazza saying to Sheryl: "Wish we'd gone to bloody Majorca." Gazza: no photographer wants to spend two weeks in Magaluf when he can be in Hawaii. So, next time you want to travel incognito, book yourself into a cosy apartment in Torremolinos, spread a rumour the Princess is in St Lucia and enjoy the peace.

A farewell to alms - of the dottier sort

Our absurd charity laws benefit public schools and lady bountifuls, yet penalise self-helpers. Reform is vital

In 2001, England's first charity law will be 400 years old. How much more worthwhile an anniversary it would be if we were to use it as the occasion for reform of the extraordinary muddle and hotch potch of political expediency and near dishonesty that passes under the name of "charity" at present.

Applying a tin opener to this can of worms comes a report today from a commission sponsored by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. Although independent, the membership of the Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector is drawn from those up to their necks in the charity world - so it is hardly cause for wonderment that it steps daintily around the really tricky issues. Reform - yes - but no talk of who the losers would be among the charities.

Why is reform vital? Because the charitable sector now has a turnover of £15bn a year with capital worth some £25bn. It matters because charitable status means every taxpayer is contributing heavily in tax forgone to a large number of mainly unaccountable and unscrutinised organisations, performing tasks that may or may not be much good.

It matters all the more now that the National Lottery is disbursing vast sums to charities, amid howls of protest about what is and what is not a worthy cause. Charity about charity matters now more than ever as charities increasingly turn themselves from alms-givers into arms of government, competing for state contracts with the private sector.

In Queen Elizabeth I's day, when charity law got going, charity meant helping poor people. What does it mean now? At present four cate-

gories of activity officially qualify for charitable status - the relief of the poor; certain purposes recognised as beneficial to the community; the advancement of religion; the advancement of education. (Strict legal definitions say nothing, note, about animals or the other bizarre causes that have slipped in.)

Queen Elizabeth II's government - if it were to start from scratch - would have to rule out religion. The majority no longer believe in it, and it would be hard in a multicultural and heathen society to prove it did good rather than causing divisive harm. The Charity Commission accepts some cults; others are excluded, but there is little to choose between some of them.

As for education - that is the biggest worm in the can. The law was designed to encourage the rich to pay for the education of the poor but now the poor taxpayer has ended up contributing to the education of the rich - the notorious Eton Question. Any reform of charity law would have to strike out the public schools. This has nothing to do with socialist vindictiveness or any desire to drive them out of business, for which there is rightly precious little public enthusiasm. It is simply impossible to reconcile Eton with the idea of charity: by no stretch of the imagination is Wills' and Harry's education a charitable cause.

But controversy is no reason for a government, left or right, to flee from charity reform. For if the Government wishes to offer some equivalent support to private schools it can do so through some other educational tax dispensation without bringing the name of charity into disrepute.

Reform would bring other losers,

otherwise there is no point in it: religion and animals would be fallers under any new law that made any sense. Today's Commission report recommends a single criterion for

Religion and animals would be excluded under any new law that made sense

charitable status - a simple declaration of "public benefit". But the Commission leaves it to others to determine who falls into that net. There would be new winners - they are the weak, the small and those without clout. Currently excluded are some of the best and most useful new groups: self-help groups - everything from tiny prisoners' families groups to anti-drink and drug or smoking groups - left out because they do good to themselves and not to others. The old-fashioned law says that only lady bountifuls get charitable status while self-helpers do not.

The flourishing new credit unions, social justice groups, human rights groups and many job creation and

unemployment schemes are also currently excluded. The closer to the ground, the more local and genuine the group, the harder it is for them to fulfil the criteria for charity registration. It means the big old charities that may have lost their original freshness and zeal lie across the tracks of smaller user-groups who want to get started. Today's report offers excellent recommendations for revitalising the whole sector.

But the real problem in all this - the one that will frighten any government - is defining in the modern world what we mean by the "good". Can we still agree on common purposes? The right-wing press's outbursts against some of the causes supported by the National Lottery Charities Board shows the problem. They only like the cuddly causes - children and the deserving sick. Forget Aids prevention among gays, rehabilitating criminals, starving victims of African wars, or treating bad boys and drug addicts. If we were to reduce charitable status to just those causes that no one could object to, then we'd end up with nothing but the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, cancer research, the National Trust and lifeboats.

The answer could be that none of them should get tax-exempt status. All these voluntary organisations should simply operate as not-for-profit companies, under normal consumer protection and company law. People could continue to donate according to their own particular whim - donkeys for some, drug addicts for others. The Government likewise. If old ladies want to leave money to cats, I do not want to be party to that lunatic trans-

action by being forced to add to their donations through tax relief taken from my pocket. The more they give, the more we all give too.

What is the chance of a bold new incoming government seizing this bunch of nettles? Small I fear - though if something is not done soon, the public will lose faith in the very idea of charitable giving, which would be a tragedy. There is nothing in it for politicians - except a guaranteed row of nuclear proportions. So, out of bowdrie, they will probably continue to let sleeping guide dogs lie.



Prince William at Eton: an unsuitable candidate for charity



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AAT

Institutions turn cool as AIM becomes victim of own success

The Alternative Investment Market is in danger of becoming a victim of its own success. There are clear signs of overheating, with old-fashioned new-issue fatigue leaving many investors reluctant to take up shares.

Half-a-dozen institutions are said to have turned their backs on AIM, at least until the autumn. They are believed to be fed up with the amount of time and effort they are expected to spend dealing with the inevitable round of presentations that accompany most flotations. And often the companies are so small and with so little investment appeal that fund managers find the exercise a waste of time.

There are also said to be worries about the liquidity of the junior market and the lack of interest often apparent once initial dealing has been completed. The twitchiness creeping into the AIM new issue queue was highlighted by

stockbroker Teather & Greenwood. It emerged that it had pulled the flotation of VLSI, an Ulster-based distributor of computer components, not because it was worried about the company but it felt the market was "a bit iffy".

Said the broker: "Everyone has either gone away for their holidays or gone to the Test match or Wimbledon. We felt it might be in the company's best interests to hang on until the autumn".

With the stampede to take AIM gathering strength there seems every chance that others will suffer the same fate as VLSI. The astonishing success of AIM has surprised many. Since it was launched last summer it has attracted a stream of companies, ranging from established groups to hopeful newcomers. The near-200 constituents spread over breweries, football clubs and assorted hi-tech groups.

Dring's of Bath, a stone-

mason, joined on Friday-Cirwood, an aluminium specialist, arrived on Monday. It is led by ex-FKI chief executive Tony Gartland and is expected to achieve a heady premium over its 122p placing. Watermark, a sales promotion and event management group moving from Ofex, should appear this week via an introduction by stockbroker Durlacher. Its chief executive is a former broker, John Caulcutt.

BATM, a maker of high-speed data equipment, is another candidate for a debut this week. Others hoping soon to embrace the fledgling share market include Alizyme, a biotech business; Chemical Design; Faywood, an audio equipment group; Hat Pin, a headhunter; Jeff Wayne Music; Life Numbers, supplying personal telephone numbers; London & Edinburgh, a publisher; LotteryKing, offering lottery tickets and dispensers to clubs; Network Technology, a com-



STOCK MARKET WEEK

DEREK PAIN
Stock market reporter
of the year

puter group; Pordum Foods, a gourmet meals delivery service; SCI, a computer games designer; and Iscom, a computer software manufacturer.

At least a score of other companies are at various stages of working their way to the junior market.

Ofex, the fringe share market run by old-style jobber John Jenkins, has also enjoyed a new issue rush. It too has exceeded expectations, with the shares of more than 100 companies already traded. It has successfully undertaken its biggest cash-raising exercise, pulling in £2m for Robotic Technology, which has a robot-operated grinding system. It also has a stream of newcomers on their way, including Happy Sports, Legends, a water sports retailer, and Woodstock, a pubs chain.

Even rights issues have been relatively subdued, considering

the level of the market. Cash calls have yet to reach £3bn, so far, well below the £10.1bn begging bowl peak of 1991. Big rights issues and flotations have, therefore, had little influence on the market's first half-year performance and Bob Semple at NatWest Securities is not looking for a rush of opportunistic cash calls in the rest of the year.

Political worries remain the biggest influence on the market which had a volatile time last week. Nick Knight at Nomura believes there is no shame in sitting out the rest of the summer with cash in the bank. He is one of those looking for a year-end Footsie around 3,400 points.

Investors should still sell the rallies, not buy the dips, is his advice. But Ian Harnett at Société Générale Straus Turnbull is as cheerful as ever. He believes the market is ready for a "major correction of 10 per cent or more".

The results programme, not

surprisingly, is getting increasingly thin. Only two large groups are scheduled to offer figures this week.

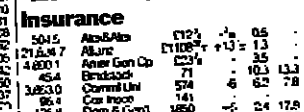
Today, Tomkins, the conglomerate, is due to roll out figures. They are unlikely to be much of a surprise; only a few weeks ago it forecast profits would be "in excess" of £30m. Last year's figure was £30m. Like other conglomerates, Tomkins' shares have had a poor time; they are only just above their 12-month low.

On the other hand shares of Dixons, the electrical retailer, are having an electrifying time, near their peak at 512p.

Profits, due on Wednesday, are likely to emerge at around £138m, against £100.3m. Hopes are running high for continuing progress this year, with the group's dominant position in its segment of the retail market and the feel-good factor less elusive. The shares, weighed down by its US problems, were a mere 170p two years ago.

DIXONS

share price, pence



Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items.

One share = 100 rights. A £1 dividend is £100. For a detailed description of the index, see the index on page 123.

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Source: FT Information

The Independent Index

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Source: FT Information

Interest Rates

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Industry calls for changes to PFI

MICHAEL HARRISON

The Government's beleaguered Private Finance Initiative will come under further attack this week in a report from the Confederation of British Industry calling for key changes in the way it operates.

The CBI report, due to be published on Thursday, will recommend that in future the PFI should apply to fewer and bigger projects with a threshold below which Government departments would no longer need to seek private funding for public transport and health schemes and the like.

This would be an important change in the way the PFI functions. Two years ago, in a bid to kick-start the initiative, Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, said that no public sector capital projects would be considered unless Whitehall had first sought to finance them under the PFI.

Although projects worth nearly £5bn have been awarded, the Channel Tunnel rail link accounts for £3bn, of this. A further 1,500 schemes worth

£27bn have been identified but the vast majority are small projects worth under £25m.

The CBI will argue that this has clogged up the system, making the PFI still more cumbersome and the bidding process too costly compared with the projects on offer.

The fresh criticism comes amid growing concern in government circles at the failure of the PFI to deliver, and the withdrawal of construction group Taylor Woodrow from the bidding for a prestige £100m PFI hospital project in Dartford, Kent.

Mr Clarke has reportedly written to the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, warning that the initiative risks being "discredited" unless Whitehall departments speed up the awarding of contracts.

The CBI report, drawn up by a steering group representing contractors, IT and facilities management firms and financiers, will also call for a case-by-case approach to the way that risk is divided between the public and private sector.



Fast track: The Channel Tunnel rail link, aimed at making the British side of the journey as speedy for Eurostar trains as the French lines, accounts for £3bn of the £5bn so far awarded for PFI projects

One source said that a "culture change" was required in the way Whitehall assessed risk management and risk transfer. The report will voice concern that the PFI is being used to substitute normal public spending on the infrastructure rather than bringing in additional finance. It will also warn that insufficient attention has been paid to the impact on the PFI of future levels of government spending since the initiative is

in effect a way of replacing capital spending today with current expenditure tomorrow. Under the PFI, the private sector pays the up-front cost of a project and then earns an annual fee for running it or leasing it back to the Government.

The CBI will caution that this may distort investment decisions, resulting in projects going ahead not on the basis of their need but whether the private sector can make a profit.

Charles Cox, an executive director of the computer group Hoskyns and the head of the CBI's steering group said: "We support the objectives of the PFI but there is a great deal of frustration at its implementation. It is not living up to the expectations of the business community or of the Government."

The report will concede that when the PFI works it works very effectively, typically producing cost savings of 20 per

cent. But the CBI believes that the delivery is too patchy.

In his letter to Mr Heseltine, the Chancellor says that when a preferred bidder has been selected things should not be allowed to "drift", adding that some service providers feel the Government loses interest once the initial announcement has been made.

Mr Clarke's observations may cause some wry smiles among contractors since one of

the most high-profile PFI projects - a £200m scheme to refurbish the Treasury's headquarters in Whitehall - is running a year behind schedule. The Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Michael Jack, the minister responsible for the PFI, introduced new guidelines to speed up the bidding process earlier this year. He said £5bn worth of deals had been done and £14bn of projects would have been agreed by 1998-99.

Lloyd's rescue plan gains support

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Support from names for Lloyd's £3.1bn rescue plan is still growing a week before it must be approved at a series of mass meetings.

The London insurance market will today announce the results of a poll showing 82 per cent of its members back the plan, up from 79 per cent in May, before the individual effects of the plan were made clear to 34,000 names worldwide through the issue of so-called indicative finality statements.

Lloyd's also said over the weekend that it had made headway in reaching agreement with US names, who have invoked US state laws in their battle to reduce their commitment to finance past losses in the London insurance market. Lloyd's officials met the American Names Association last week.

A spokesman said yesterday: "Good progress was made and we hope that in the course of the next few days we can resolve matters satisfactorily."

Coming after many of the members' action groups lent their support to the plan last week, the weekend news will buoy the Lloyd's authorities ahead of next Monday's annual and extraordinary meetings, at which the proposals must be given the green light by the market's backers. David Rowland, Lloyd's chairman, commented: "I am greatly encouraged that the majority of members recognise clearly the settlement offer we are making reflects the efforts that all parties have made to build consensus to resolve our problems."

The latest survey, part of a regular series carried out by Market & Opinion Research International, shows that just over a quarter of the 500 members polled still feel unfairly treated by the settlement, despite Lloyd's agreement in May to top up the original proposals by £300m.

Support for the special contribution of £440m to be levied on names writing business in the profitable years of 1993, 1994 and 1995 has also slipped.

On Friday, Lloyd's is expected to end five years of losses by announcing a profit of £1.18bn for the 1995 underwriting year.



Tony Greener: Ready for radical action to revive growth

Guinness rules out Grand Met bid

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Guinness, the drinks giant chaired by Tony Greener, yesterday signalled its readiness to take radical action to revive its flagging earnings growth after admitting that it had looked at launching a £13.2bn megabid for rival Grand Metropolitan.

A move of such size would revive memories of the controversial £2.4bn takeover of Distillers 10 years ago and represent one of the biggest bids ever seen in the UK.

The company in effect squashed the plan put forward by its merchant banking advisers Lazard, which would have involved taking on more than £10bn of debt and selling off the

historic stout-brewing operation to create the world's biggest spirits business. But the fact that a deal of this size was considered will suggest to many in the City that Guinness is ready to move up a gear in tackling its stagnating traditional drinks markets and recent management problems in its spirits division.

Guinness yesterday poured cold water on any suggestion it was ready to go for Grand Met, a move that has been rumoured for some time. It said that, as with other large companies, it routinely analysed possible developments in the industry. "It regrets that documents relating to one such hypothetical possibility should have been subject to unauthorised publicity. Guinness has no intention of making a hostile bid for Grand Metropolitan or demerging or selling its brewing interests."

Guinness said it was not taking any takeover or merger talks had taken place. He dismissed the Lazard plans as part of normal business life. "Merchant banks' waste paper baskets are full of similar proposals", he said. "We're never complacent, but we're currently in pretty good shape. We're in the middle of the best year ever and all the things we've done over the past few years are bearing fruit."

The Lazard proposals were thought to have been discussed with senior Guinness executives at the end of last month.

but it appears not to have taken them long to reject them. A number of formidable obstacles stand in the way of such a deal, not least of which would be the enormous scale of the debt initially involved in buying Grand Met. One insider said the forecasts involved in the plans "tend to suggest the numbers are too big. It couldn't be done."

Much of the proposed £10.6bn cash cost of the bid, dubbed Project Reflection, would have been recouped by selling off assets, including Guinness's brewing division, which is valued by Lazard at £3.7bn. Other disposals would have comprised Grand Met's food division, including Pillsbury doughs to Haagen-Dazs ice cream, expected to fetch around £5bn, and the Burger King to Pearle eyecare retailing businesses, valued at £2.5bn.

Apart from huge capital gains tax liabilities on these sales, Grand Met's valuation of brands on its balance sheet could have created problems for potential US bidders, who would have been forced to depreciate them over a period of years, depressing earnings.

There would also have been political hurdles. Merging Guinness's Johnnie Walker, the world's biggest selling whisky, with Grand Met's J&B, the second-biggest, could have given the combined group 40-50 per cent of US and UK market, on some estimates.

Feel-good factor returns to industry and the City

MICHAEL HARRISON

The feel-good factor is flooding back into the economy according to a welter of surveys out today showing a sharp rise in confidence across industry, the City and consumers.

The Confederation of British Industry reports that optimism among financial services firms is at a three-year high following the biggest increase in business since 1989. The survey is backed by a Gallup survey for the investment bank Merrill Lynch showing that UK fund managers are much more bullish about the equity market now than they were a month ago.

Separately, the Finance and Leasing Association predicted that consumer confidence would rise and rise after its latest figures showed a 24 per cent increase in demand for credit year on year.

The picture of economic optimism was further reinforced by a KPMG survey showing that business is booming among

owner-managed companies where profits are up by an average of 18 per cent compared with the previous 12 months.

According to the latest CBI-Coopers and Lybrand financial services survey, optimism is increasing at the fastest rate since March 1993. Building societies report the strongest rise in business confidence followed by banks and life insurers.

Only general insurers, security traders and venture capitalists record a drop in confidence compared with three months ago.

Despite the rise in confidence, employment in financial services fell in the second quarter of the year and bigger job cuts are expected over the next three months. The rise in business volumes has also come at the expense of narrower margins, said CBI economist Sudhir Junankar.

The Merrill Lynch survey, compiled before last Friday's sharp correction on Wall Street, shows that a balance of 20 per

cent of fund managers are more bullish than bearish on UK equities with general retailers the most favoured stocks. Last month there were fractionally more bears than bulls.

Martin Hall, director general of the Finance and Leasing Association, said its members expected demand for consumer credit to rise considerably in coming months, bolstered by falling interest rates and taxes. In May, total consumer credit provided by F&LA members rose 24 per cent to just over £2bn.

According to KPMG, operating profits among owner-managed businesses are growing most strongly in the west of England, where the increase was 34 per cent, followed by the Midlands. Firms in the South-east reported the fastest growth in turnover. The report attributed the improvement to improved technology, cost control, investment and marketing but also to the return of, if not quite the feel-good then the feel-better factor.

Dutch and Italians 'meanest in Europe'

PATRICK TOOHER

National stereotypes are both reinforced and challenged with the publication today of an extensive survey on European consumer spending habits.

The phrase "going Dutch" is given added resonance with the revelation that the good burghers of Holland, together with their Italian counterparts, are the least generous in Europe. They spend a miserly 1.7 per cent of their annual household income on gifts for friends and family.

The Brits, on the other hand, emerge as the most generous, splashing out £450 a year, or 4.4 per cent of their expenditure, on presents for friends and family. Only the Austrians are as munificent.

The survey by credit card company Visa also confirms that an Englishman's home remains his castle. Almost a third of UK average monthly spending expenditure goes on housing, a figure beaten only by the

Swedes of the frozen north. But the notion that the French and the Italians are obsessed with style and fashion is comprehensively debunked. In fact, the Dutch and the Turks allocate the highest amount of their monthly income to clothes.

While Italians' spending is line with the European average, the French put aside a mere 6 per cent of monthly household expenditure on couture. Only the Brits and the Swedes are as down-at-heel.

As with most surveys, some of the findings are entirely underwhelming. For example, spending on holidays is generally lower in the warmer, Mediterranean countries.

Apart from wide differences in spending patterns the survey of 5,000 Europeans carried out for Visa also showed varied attitudes to payment methods.

Plastic is most popular in the Netherlands, where 92 per cent of those surveyed hold a payment card, followed by the UK on 72 per cent.

Somerfield profits surge by 43% despite slow Gateway

NIGEL COPE

Somerfield, the debt-laden supermarket group seeking a £500m stock market flotation this month, has seen a strong rise in operating profits though sales are still being held back by a poor performance from the old Gateway stores.

Profits in the year to April rose 43 per cent to £100.5m, boosted by higher sales of own-label products, a stronger fresh food offer and better control of the supply chain. It is also understood that some of the profit rise came from bulk discounts from suppliers.

However, the company stresses that its method of accounting for such payments is not that employed by Wickes, the DIY group, where bulk discounts caused a profits overstatement. David Simons, Somerfield's chief executive, says such payments are monitored closely. Somerfield's sales last year

were flat at £3.16bn. The 343 stores trading under the Somerfield name have performed well but the 238 Gateway stores are experiencing weak demand.

In the eight weeks since the year-end the company says trading has been above expectations. It is thought that like-for-like sales are running around 5 per cent above the same period last year. Though this is way behind Asda, where sales are 12 per cent higher, it is ahead of Sainsbury's which announced a 3.3 per cent uplift last week.

The margin has been increased from 2.2 to 3.2 per cent helped by a better fresh food offer, lower levels of waste and better management of the supply chain.

The company has extended its Premier Points loyalty scheme to 284 stores and hopes to offer it in all the converted stores by September. So far around 3 million customers have taken up the card. The sales uplift is 5-6 per cent. Net operating cash flow is strong, up 18 per cent to £160.8m.

Though some sections of the City have been negative about the longer-term prospects of the company, Mr Simons said the feedback from potential investors had been good. "We've had a good response, though obviously people are keeping their powder dry until the pricing."

He said there was still room for improvement in the margin and supplier arrangements.

STOCK MARKETS						
FTSE 100						
	Index	Close	Week's chg	Change%	1996 High	1996 Low
FTSE 100		3748.20	+192.2	+0.9	3857.10	3639.50
FTSE 250		4367.20	+14.0	+0.3	4568.60	4015.30
FTSE 350		1884.80	+13.9	+0.7	1945.40	1816.80
FT Small Cap		2186.10	-4.9	-0.2	2244.36	1954.06
FT All Share		1968.75	+12.4	+0.7	1924.17	1791.95
New York		5588.14	-6.5	-1.2	5778.00	5032.94
Tokyo		22232.42	-298.3	-1.3	22666.80	19734.70
Hong Kong		11177.13	+156.2	+1.4	11594.99	10204.67
Frankfurt		2563.48	+22.1	+0.9	2583.49	2253.36

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES

UK interest rates

Bank of England's yield curve 0-25 year rates (%)

Year	3/7/98 (%)	1 month (%)
1990	6.0	6.0
1991	6.5	6.5
1992	7.5	7.5
1993	7.0	7.0
1994	6.5	6.5
1995	6.0	6.0
1996	5.5	5.5
1997	5.0	5.0
1998	5.5	5.5
1999	6.0	6.0
2000	6.5	6.5

All prices are monthly conversion

US interest rates

Bank of England's yield curve 0-30 year rates (%)

Year	3/7/98 (%)	1 month (%)
1990	5.5	5.5
1991	6.0	6.0
1992	7.0	7.0
1993	6.5	6.5
1994	6.0	6.0
1995	5.5	5.5
1996	5.0	5.0
1997	5.5	5.5
1998	6.0	6.0
1999	6.5	6.5
2000	7.0	7.0

Source: Merrill Lynch

Money Market Rates

Index	1 Month	1 Year	Round Yields *	Year Ago	Long Bond	Q3 Year Ago
UK	6.72	5.84	7.87	8.12	9.09	8.21
US	5.31	6.10	7.02	6.06	7.16	6.53
Japan	0.47	1.03	3.27	2.80	3.76	3.53
Germany	3.25	3.68	6.61	6.72	7.37	-

*Roundness Indices

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Index	Close	Week's chg	% chg	Index	Close	Week's chg	% chg
Essex - Top 5				Falls - Top 5			
Abbey National	585	44	8.1	Orange	207.5	16	8.0
Imperial	282	28.5	8.1	Eurotherm	544	46	7.8
Vickers	261	19	7.9	Chiroscience Group	391	33	7.8

CURRENCIES						
£/\$						
	Index	Close	Week's chg	% chg	Index	Close
\$ (London)		1.5551	+0.13c	1.5645	\$ (London)	0.6430
\$ (New York)		1.5570	+1.65c	1.5668	\$ (New York)	0.6423
DM (London)		2.3781	+1.10p	2.429	DM (London)	1.5290
DM (New York)		172.432	+12.09p	156.09	DM (New York)	110.885
¥ (London)		86.7	+0.4	88.5	¥ (London)	97.6

OTHER INDICATORS						
	Index	Close	Week's chg	% chg	Index	Close
Oil Brent		19.74	+0.83	16.11	RPI	152.9
Gold		381.65	-0.35	385.00	GDP	130.2
Gold £		245.42	-0.90	242.25	Base Rates	5.75pc

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COMPANIES COURT

IN THE MATTER OF
ROYAL INSURANCE HOLDINGS plc
and
IN THE MATTER OF
THE COMPANIES ACT 1985

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Petition was on 18th June 1996 presented to Her Majesty's High Court of Justice for (a) the sanctioning of a Scheme of Arrangement and (b) the confirmation of the reduction of the capital of the above-named company.

AND NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that the said Petition is directed to be heard before the Companies Court Registrar at the Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London, WC2A 2LL on Wednesday the 17th day of July 1996.

ANY Creditor or Shareholder of the said Company desiring to oppose the making of an Order for the confirmation of the said reduction of capital should appear at the time of hearing in person or by Counsel for that purpose.

A copy of the said Petition will be furnished to any such person requiring the same by the under-mentioned Solicitors on payment of the regulated charge for the same.

Dated the 5th day of July 1996.

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Solicitors for the above-named Company

'If Labour's budget objectives allowed the PSBR to be around 1 per cent of GDP higher than the Tories' over the medium term, this difference would be equivalent to £8bn off the annual tax burden'

A couple of weeks ago, I wrote in this column that Labour's fiscal objectives would probably turn out to be a little less tough than those of the present Government, and intimated that this might leave scope for lower taxes or higher public spending than would be possible under the Conservatives' medium-term policy framework. I was taken to task for this remark by Ed Balls, the very able economic adviser to Gordon Brown, who told me that Labour's objectives were at least as tough as Ken Clarke's, and that there was no intention of allowing scope for an easier fiscal stance if Labour won the election. Since this dispute can now be settled by reference to the precise commitments in Labour's policy document published last Thursday, it is a subject worth revisiting.

The situation changed between the Budgets of 1994 and 1995. Last year, the Red Book said that the objective was "to bring the PSBR back towards balance over the medium term". Note that the word "towards" has been substituted for the word "to" in the previous Red Book, thus making the commitment somewhat vaguer. In addition, the budget tables showed that the PSBR would be eliminated in 1999/2000, a year later than

Thus, the Chancellor appears to have two targets, involving a PSBR of zero, or of 1 per cent of GDP, and you can take your pick between them. To my knowledge, the Chan-


ties is to hit the golden rule, so there is not the width of a cigarette paper between them. I suspect that this is what Ed Balls had in mind when he disputed the assertion in my

Given these impending problems, Mr Brown may need to use every ounce of the flexibility he has left himself on the PSBR if Labour should win.


Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit."

The news comes as Glaxo Wellcome's anti-Aids drugs are expected to be boosted by promising results of trials due to be released this week at a meeting of specialists in Canada.

Findings presented at the 11th international conference on Aids in Vancouver, which started over the weekend, should confirm the efficacy of Glaxo Wellcome's Retrovir and Epivir drugs. But most excitement will be reserved for news of three-way combinations with other pharmaceuticals and the latest clinical trials of a new compound code-named 1592, which has the potential to be better than either of the anti-Aids drugs.



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12

SCIENCE

The great European space scandal

The designs are complete for a fleet of reusable spaceplanes to rival Nasa's X-33 rocket. But the ESA won't build them. Why? **Charles Arthur** reports

David Ashford is incandescent. In fact, he sounds as heated as a rocket burning its way up through the atmosphere. Quite simply, he says, Britain's place – or lack of it – in space is "a scandal".

And indeed, it might seem that we are falling behind. Europe has never had anything like the Space Shuttle; and now we will have something new to compete with. Last week the US space agency Nasa announced that it will get Lockheed to build the prototype for its next generation of spacecraft to replace the ageing fleet of space shuttles. The X-33 is intended to be flying by the end of the century, travelling uncrewed up to 80km into space: it is the forerunner to a large spacecraft, the Reusable

Launch Vehicle (RLV), that will succeed it later next century.

Europe has no such reusable rocket planned, although it does have a program called Festip (Future European Space Transportation Investigation Program) which is looking at the feasibility of a reusable rocket. But meanwhile, the European Space Agency has a recent failure to understand. The report is due later this month. Many engineers are hoping that the cause will be pinpointed to a flaw in the controlling software – an easily-remedied problem – rather than in the design of some other part, or parts, which would entail a costly redesign, followed by even more costly individual and assembled testing. But what makes Ashford,

head of Bristol Spaceplanes, so furious is that he reckons Britain, and Europe, could have a project comparable to the X-33 up and running well before the Americans, taking bigger loads into space for less money. And he knows because he submitted his plans to the British National Space Centre back in 1991.

"I call it the Great British Space Scandal," he says. "For a billion pounds we could develop a fleet of spaceplanes that would have all the characteristics of the American one – except that it could carry a crew and get into orbit as well." Carrying a crew is an important aspect, since it means that real payloads – such as small communications satellites – could be taken up and placed in the low orbits where they are required.

"Anybody who had a small, cheap spaceplane now would be able to make a killing," says Richard Tremayne-Smith, of the British National Space Centre. "There are potentially hundreds of satellites going up. There's a proven market, and those satellites, once up, will need resupplying from time to time. You can see large revenue streams for a spaceplane." In a decade, according to Bruce Smith of Smith Systems Engineering, the world market for telecommunications satellites in the next ten years will be \$30bn. And that doesn't include military customers.

So why, asks Mr Ashford, not go with his designs? He has been designing reusable spaceplanes for 30 years; his latest is called the Ascender, which he reckons needs only an initial £35m of industrial and other funding to get the project going. It could be built by 1999, and if all the tests go well, could carry fare-paying payloads into orbit three years later. Building a fleet would cost about a billion pounds.

The design is comparatively simple – unsurprising, as Mr Ashford has had many goes at refining it. His first job was in an aerospace team that was designing an orbital spaceplane.

Since then he has produced many tweaked designs to follow the requirements of the day. The latest is the Ascender, which would initially be powered by a Rolls-Royce Viper jet engine, which would take it 8km high.

Then a rocket powered by hydrazine (N₂H₄) – the fuel of choice for space missions – would take over, taking the capsule to 65km before its fuel store ran out, by which time it would be travelling at three times the speed of sound. The Ascender would then coast to a height of 95km, allowing about two minutes of micro-gravity. "You would be able to see the curvature of the Earth," says Mr Ashford.

And, most important, you would be able to release satellites for uses such as Motorola's planned Iridium global satellite phone project, or for commercial Earth Observation work.

However, ESA is not about to build a spaceplane in the near future – or for some time to come, says Mr Tremayne-Smith. "First, there's just no money available," he says. "Festip is largely being led by Germany; the UK and France aren't involved, and aren't putting any money into it." Anyway, for the time being Festip is only looking at available technologies and systems.

"The idea that European governments will suddenly start spending money to build reusable launchers is just plain wrong. The world has already built one – the Space Shuttle. We know it can be done. What really matters is the economics, and whether it's cost-effective."

The average one-off launcher, such as Ariane-5, costs about £100m. To beat that, a reusable spaceplane would have to cost at least five times less per

launch, and ideally 10 times less. As long as it is truly reusable, the one-off cost of building it is quickly amortised by the savings on the delicate assembly needed for disposable launchers.

However, the British government appears stretched for cash for even the simplest things. Ian Taylor, the minister for science, told a recent meeting in London that space projects were to receive an extra £10m of funding this year. "But don't ask me where I got it from," he said, as though expecting his audience to query him immediately. "There is, as you should know, no such thing as new money. I have a budget and I can fiddle with it." The clear implication being, of course, that the Government sees space as a key: "A successful space program is in the national interest," he told the audience, which comprised the cream of

Britain's space expertise. Instead, ESA does not plan to test any sort of reusable space launcher probably for another 15 to 20 years. Festip will watch how Nasa gets on with the X-33 – which is being built for it by Lockheed.

Nasa's move towards a "partnership" with Lockheed has been forced on it by political realities – a restive Congress, annoyed about its huge budget, has forced these changes upon it. As Daniel Goldin, Nasa's administrator said when the contract was announced, "This program is a radical departure from the way Nasa has done business in the past. We won't build the vehicle – industry will. Nasa will be a user, not an operator."

Lockheed, in turn, will sink \$220m in the X-33 design. The overarching purpose of the project is to make it cheaper to get people and payloads into space

– which is an increasingly valuable place to be.

"Lockheed's preparedness to sink that money into the project was probably key in its success," says Mr Tremayne-Smith. "I suppose that if we really pulled all the stops out, then we could be just two or three years behind the US." But, he implies, it's unlikely that ESA's priorities will change that suddenly. And it's worth remembering that ESA has always given its clients – the governments (and so taxpayers) – far better value for money than its American rival.

Where does this leave Mr Ashford, and his plan? Unfortunately, still searching for big industrial backing.

It's a pity, really, since one of the uses he envisages for the Ascender is as one of the shortest – but most fun – joyrides of your life. Payloads don't only come in satellite form, after all. Re-

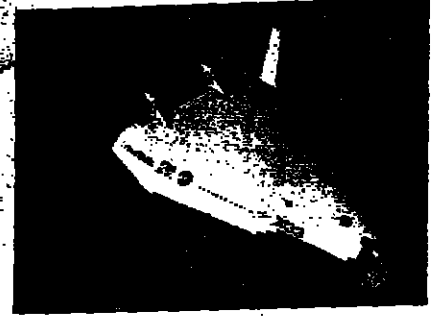
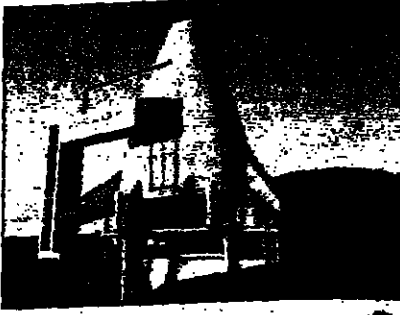
search in Japan had found that up to a million people a year would be prepared to pay \$10,000 each to travel, however briefly, into space.

Well, why not go as a passenger on a reusable spaceplane? The trip into space, far enough to see the curve of the Earth, would be only half the fun: the return trip would start with a steep dive at Mach 3, until 25km above the ground, when the pilot would pull the nose up in a gut-wrenching big curve, before coasting the capsule back to base. The trip would last 30 minutes. It would certainly be a funfair.

Mr Ashford reckons that a fleet of 50 Ascenders would be enough to ensure that the revenue flow covered the ongoing and capital costs relatively quickly. But whether they ever get built remains a question as unknown as space itself.



Left: Dan Goldin of Nasa presenting the choice of the X-33 design last week. Below: simulated images of the X-33 on the launchpad, in flight, and of its successor, the Reusable Launch Vehicle ascending into orbit. Bottom left: the explosion of the Ariane 5 last month. Photographs: EPA



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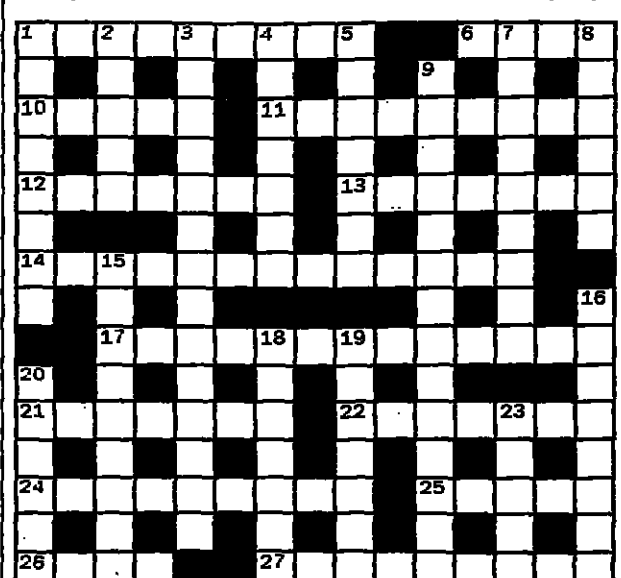
*Only one last free one minute one are charged at 50p/min at all other times. All profits will be donated to Heart of Britain Project. Lines close 10th July 1996.



THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

Monday 3 July

By Corylus



- ACROSS**
- Where farmer's wife keeps things? (5,5)
 - What's said by one making promise to Latin hero (4)
 - Burning coal, endlessly abundant in heat (7)
 - It keeps passage open for sailor sailing Le Cabot (7)
 - Rugged seacrest claims one's colleague (9)
 - Officer in charge is a pain (5)
 - Society girl abandoned care-free broadcasting (2,3)
 - What can whirl away more? (9)
 - It could be suitable for the rest of the soldiers (6,3)
 - Bury no women in cold weather (5)
 - Ten live in city boat (5)
 - Novice's brass instrument covered in verdigris? (9)
 - Rum folk given time for a bit (7)
 - Revolving old boy with new animal has incurred debts (9)
 - Grounds for putting away a relation (9)
 - Exorbitantly priced drink and meal (4,5)
 - Crime of corrupt senator (7)
 - Sign of, say, expert from south (5)
 - Born on sabbath day, brought up to have demands (5)

- In the main a way to be showing good judgement about bad ale (3,4)
- Interview Germany's Wimbledon hopeful? (4)
- Composer isn't as same as performer (5-5)

DOWN

- Expression of pain at rotter's turning up in country house (5)
- Line from composer on person's magical things (9)
- Difficult as pound shillings and pence? (4,10)
- Show great joy at current demand (7)
- Where congregation gather round one, note innocence (7)
- Sleever erected toilet by road (5)
- One arriving in hearse? (4-5)
- Source of sounds making drummers hot-headed? (10,4)
- Revolving old boy with new animal has incurred debts (9)
- Grounds for putting away a relation (9)
- Exorbitantly priced drink and meal (4,5)
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